

TEENAGER Yvette Gate is a perfect example why more people should join the Anthony Nolan Trust donor register.

Yvette became ill in 2004 when she was 10 years old. She was diagnosed as suffering from aplastic anaemia. Her bone marrow had stopped working, which meant her body was not producing its own blood, and her immune system had failed.

She quickly became exhausted and became susceptible to bleeding, bruising and infections. She underwent various treatments, including blood transfusions, but her only remaining chance of a cure is through a bone marrow transplant.

Yvette's stepfather David is originally from St Andrews, Scotland. He moved to Bristol in 1990, and met Mary, Yvette's mum, when he was on holiday in The Gambia in west Africa. David and Mary married in 1994, when Yvette was a baby.

David and Mary launched the Yvette Gate Bone Marrow Campaign in 2005 to raise awareness about donating bone marrow. The campaign won charitable status last year, and he is about to leave his job at the University of the West of England to concentrate on the campaign full-time.

Hoping to go back to school

Speaking from his home in Bedminster, David said: "We feel lucky at the moment because Yvette's condition has recently improved. She is doing so well that we are hoping she will be able to return to school in September. She was last at school in 2004.

"She hasn't had to have a transfusion for some time, though she still has to have regular blood tests and we keep a constant eye on her temperature. Her platelet level is very low but it doesn't seem to be getting any worse. She had a bone marrow test a couple of weeks ago and we're waiting for the results to see if there is any activity.

"To look at her, you wouldn't think there was anything wrong with her; like a lot of illnesses, it's all going on inside. But three or four weeks ago we had to spend a couple of days in hospital with her after she picked up a bug. Her immune system just isn't there."

DAVID says a bone marrow transplant could well cure her - by making her body start producing blood again. She is more likely to find a match from a black donor. There's a lack of donors generally, but even fewer black donors.

David said: "We simply need more people, especially young men and people from ethnic minorities, to join the register. We work closely with the Anthony Nolan Trust. We organise registration clinics and the ANT looks after the medical side of things.

"People just need to find out more about bone marrow. When they hear emotive words like transplant, marrow and bone, the barriers often come down. When they get to know more about it, learn about the register and the reasons why they should join, many people actually do."

The Yvette Gate Bone Marrow Campaign is holding a registration clinic in The Galleries shopping mall in Bristol on Saturday, September 22. For more information about the charity, visit www.yvettegate.co.uk

Just amazing for us to know that doing so little can mean so much

Yesterday, Western Daily Press deputy editor Stephen White described what it was like to donate bone marrow. Today, he speaks to a man whose step-daughter needs a transplant and to two people about what donating stem cells meant to them

The Anthony Nolan Trust has almost 400,000 names on its donor register. Since it was launched in 1974, it has given more than 5,000 people the chance of life. There are now more than 50 similar registers across the world, offering a total of 11 million potential donors. The ANT is always looking for more people to join its register, and particularly wants more young men and people from ethnic minorities. To join the register you must be aged under 40 and in good health. Joining the register is simple and takes only a few minutes - you simply complete a form and a small sample (about a teaspoonful) of blood is taken. If you want to volunteer, or you want more details, ring 020 7284 1234 or visit www.anthonynolan.org.uk.



Donor hope: Yvette Gate with her stepfather David, mum Mary and brother, Solomon



Spreading the word: Medical student Jenny Dawes

I never had any doubt and would do it all again!

MEDICAL student Jenny Dawes, 21, of Kingsdown, likes to spread the word about the virtues of joining the bone marrow register.

She heard about the Anthony Nolan Trust through its student arm, Marrow, when she joined Bristol University two years ago. The UK's 25 Marrow groups raise awareness of the trust and raise money for it.

Last year, with Jenny as a member of its organising committee, Bristol University's Marrow group trained 70 counsellors, although Jenny believes she is the only member to have donated stem cells. She joined the Anthony Nolan Trust register last March and within a year had been identified as a match.

She donated stem cells by peripheral blood collection at University College Hospital, London, in April.

She said: "I decided to donate via the peripheral blood method because I didn't like the idea of a

general anaesthetic when it wasn't absolutely necessary.

"Also, perhaps because I'm a medical student, I like to know what people are doing to me and I like to watch.

"When the letter arrived in the excited. It's great that doing so little can mean so much for someone else.

"I never had doubts about doing it and would go through it again without a shadow of a doubt. "My mum thought it was great - she went to London with me, got two free nights in a hotel and loved the shopping.

"Afterwards, I felt a bit rough at times, a bit tired and a bit aches from the injections, but I had a few days off uni and then I was fine."

Jenny is working during her holidays as an accident and emergency X-ray receptionist in her home city of Leeds.

All she knows about her patient is that he is an adult and the transplant was a success.

I was changing my life... and I

NEIL Carter, a gardener at the National Trust's Dyrham Park, near Bath, had an unusual reason for becoming an Anthony Nolan donor.

Neil, 39, of Corsham, Wiltshire, said: "I was going

through some big life and career changes, and thought as I was making changes to my life, I would like to make a change to someone else's.

"I was working in the telecoms industry and going

through a divorce. I wanted a more worthwhile job and wanted to do something for someone else.

"Giving bone marrow seemed more tangible than giving blood - this way I could help a

wanted to help change someone else's

particular person who needed specific help."

Neil joined the Anthony Nolan Trust's register in 2001 and was called as a match in December 2006.

He said: "I planned to give

bone marrow but the surgeon ruled me out because I had suffered from sciatica.

"I still wanted to donate, so I agreed to donate stem cells via the peripheral blood method.

"I went into University College Hospital in London, taking about a week off work altogether.

"I felt a bit tired and 'fluey' afterwards but I had no regrets, and would certainly

do it again if I was asked."

He added: "All I know about my patient is that she's an adult female. I've had a couple of updates about her and apparently she's doing well."



Donor: Neil Carter at Dyrham Park