



June 8, 2009

SICK SON'S HUNT FOR A LIFE SAVER

KIN PUT OUT CALL FOR MARROW DONOR

A year after his dad was diagnosed with a rare, incurable cancer, 5-year-old Kai Anderson has been stricken with a form of leukemia that will be fatal without a bone-marrow transplant.

"It was just devastating," said Birgit Anderson, 36, Kai's mom.

"We took him to the doctor, and they ran a blood test, and they called us in, and they had tears in their eyes. They said . . . we needed to take him to the hospital."

Since she and husband David, 42, heard that shattering news, the lower Manhattan couple has been aggressively seeking potential bone-marrow donors by first asking them to get painless cheek swabs to test their compatibility.

On Wednesday, anyone who wants to submit a sample to possibly help Kai -- or others needing bone-marrow transplants -- can be swabbed at the indoor playground **apple seeds, at 10 W. 25th St., from noon to 5 p.m.**



More information is available at www.hopeforkai.com, including details about how people can obtain a self-test kit.

If found to be a match, a donor would undergo either a procedure similar to donating blood or have his or her marrow directly sampled.

"In both cases, it's an outpatient procedure," Birgit said, adding that the process is painless.

Katharina Harf, president of DKMS, the world's largest bone-marrow donor center, said:

"Once [people have] donated, they tell you it's the most meaningful thing they've done in their lives. You really can give life." Pointing out that the chances of any patient's finding a compatible marrow donor are just three out of 10, Harf said, "We don't know whether [Kai's] going to find a match."

But both she and Kai's mom noted that as more people join the national bone-marrow donor pool, those odds will improve.

Birgit Anderson said that before Kai got sick, he was a "whirlwind" and "very energetic."

Until a donor is found for him, Kai will continue to undergo chemotherapy.

Meanwhile, his father, in an effort to maintain his own quality of life, has so far avoided undergoing a stem-cell transplant, the common treatment for his diagnosis of mantle cell lymphoma.

Even if David Anderson had that procedure, his type of cancer usually recurs within seven years, experts say.

"It's absolutely horrible," Harf said. "This family has been through so much."