

Mary Montellano

"Your heart will be filled."

In 2008, when Mary Montellano received a phone call from staff at the national marrow donor registry, she thought it was a mistake. At first she didn't even remember signing up for the program. But her initial response was positive. She was glad to move forward with more testing, still not believing that she could be a possible marrow match for someone in need.

While each phase of the testing progressed, she moved closer and closer to being the best choice. Mary learned that she was a near perfect match for a little 7-year-old girl in California. "I too, had a child, Alejandra, who was 11 at the time." Her natural instinct was to help this child.

"My heart said yes, but my mind was scared at the same time," Mary recalled. "The team at the South Texas Blood & Tissue Center marrow program was unbelievable. They were with me through everything, explained every little detail, held my hand when I got emotional. They never left my side."

On July 10, 2008, Mary donated bone marrow. During this process, marrow is extracted from the back of the pelvis using a special needle and syringe. The patient is under anesthesia during the procedure.

The donation was a success and in August of 2009, she met her recipient through pictures, e-mail and phone calls. "I cried the night I heard her little voice say hello," Mary remembers. Bryna has started school, loves to play dress-up and do 'girly' things.

"Her mother loves her so much, just like I love my little girl. I was glad to donate my marrow and witness a miracle." She recalled, "It is so rewarding. Your heart will be filled. I'm the biggest baby and the procedure didn't hurt."

Mary added, "So please donate! Be The Match!"



Mary Montellano encourages others to join The Be The Match Registry.