The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions transformed daily life for all of us. Patients faced new concerns about access to treatment and risks from infection. New travel restrictions meant frequent itinerary changes for donors en route to their lifesaving donations. To ensure both continuation of service and the safety and well-being of our employees, we mandated a work-from-home policy. In the face of unforeseen obstacles and complications, DKMS adapted quickly. Our concern, first and foremost, continues to be the health and safety of our patients, donors, and staff.

Despite the ongoing challenges, DKMS remains steadfast in our mission to save the lives of patients with blood cancer or blood disorders. Knowing that we have the power to act and provide lifesaving solutions, we have found new ways to work in order to ensure patient care is not disrupted. Through it all, we found inspiration in the resilience of our patients, the altruism of our donors, and the assistance of the many incredible individuals who have supported DKMS along the way. Here are some of the things that inspired us in 2020.

At the end of March, DKMS celebrated a remarkable milestone: 10 million potential donors registered worldwide. This landmark achievement means that today, nearly one-third of all potential donors worldwide are registered with DKMS. Our success is only made possible by a network of extraordinary volunteers and supporters around the world.

A RECORD-BREAKING NUMBER OF REGISTRANTS

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43,000+ New Registrants

In 2020, we added more than 43,000 new registrants to the donor pool in the US, and more than 750,000 globally.

After the pandemic shut down our in-person events in mid-March, the majority of these new potential donors registered online.

79% online

21% in-person

1,100

New potential donors registered at the Team Harrison donor drive in Dallas in January.

11,000+

People inspired to request online swab kits by the story of Baby Nisa, who was diagnosed with leukemia at just two months old.

Donating in the middle of all that’s going on has really underscored the reality of how connected we all are.

-Will, DKMS donor
HEROIC DONORS WHO WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND

371

Second chances at life

Peripheral Blood Stem Cell Donation

Bone Marrow Donation

85%

15%

In 2020, we added 12 new apheresis and collection center partners, the medical facilities where donors go for the day of their donation. This was critical in limiting travel during the pandemic, in most cases allowing our donors to donate within a 250 mile radius.

There were 1,914 miles between donor Jessica and recipient Nicholas when they met, virtually, for the first time in September. Though there were no hugs to commemorate the memorable moment, there were tears of joy as Nicholas’s mother read a heartfelt letter. She thanked Jessica saying, “Nicholas is going to grow up to live a normal life, and I don’t think we can ever repay you enough.”

Despite an international travel ban, 100% of DKMS donations still arrived to recipients around the world with the help of many tireless couriers, dedicated hospital staff, and all those who work together knowing that cancer treatment cannot be put on hold.

8,851 miles

From Washington, D.C. to New Zealand, the farthest a stem cell donation traveled this year

70% of transplants were domestic

30% of transplants were international

8,851 miles

From Washington, D.C. to New Zealand, the farthest a stem cell donation traveled this year

TOGETHER WE RAISED MORE THAN $4,000,000 IN 2020

More than 3,000 people viewed our virtual gala in September, where actor Hugh Jackman surprised a patient and donor pair who were meeting for the first time. The event helped raise over $3.5 million, allowing us to register many more new donors.

Our foundation grant program raised $350,000, including $50,000 to fund our new “Power of Blood” campaign, which was launched to increase representation of Black Americans in the donor pool. Sisters Kylie and Kimora both have sickle cell disease, a condition which disproportionately affects people of African ancestry. In a unique situation, finding one donor could save both girls.