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## **CALIFORNIA MOTHER OF TWO MEETS MARROW DONOR** **WHO SAVED HER LIFE**

### **Joyful Meeting Took Place on February 20 at Gift of Life Marrow Registry Virtual Celebrating Life Event**

**Boca Raton, FL, February 25** – A California wife and mother of two had an emotional, yet joyful first-time meeting with the selfless young woman who donated bone marrow that saved her life during Gift of Life Marrow Registry’s virtual Celebrating Life event on February 20. Michael Bohnen, President of the Adelson Family Foundation, a long-time Gift of Life supporter, made the heartwarming introduction of the donor-recipient pair.

In November 2018, Veronica Ruiz, a 38-year old legal assistant from Tracy, Calif., was diagnosed with severe aplastic anemia after experiencing significant shortness of breath, fatigue, foggy headedness and weakness. Her only hope of treating this rare disorder, in which the body stops producing enough new blood cells, would be a marrow transplant. After many blood transfusions, days of chemotherapy and radiation treatment, she ultimately received the donated marrow in July 2019 at Stanford Hospital in Palo Alto, Calif.

“I was confused and didn’t understand the severity,” said Ruiz. “There wasn’t an explanation of why or how I acquired this blood disorder. There was so much unknown of aplastic anemia.”

No one in her family proved to be a match, but thankfully for Ruiz, her donor, Jennifer Winick, had joined Gift of Life’s registry in 2016 during a Birthright trip to Israel. Upon learning that she was a match for someone in need, the 27-year-old New York City resident was surprised, yet determined to help.

“I was curious about who my match was and in what state he or she was in, so I was worried in that sense, but excited that I had the opportunity to change that,” said Winick.

After the required wait time of at least one year that is obligated by medical anonymity laws, the two were excited to meet and their joy was contagious. Surrounded by her two children and husband, Ruiz expressed gratitude for a second chance at life and ability to watch her children grow. “I am deeply thankful for your bone marrow donation,” she said. “If not for your generosity, I would not be alive today.”

“During this entire process, I kept trying to put myself in her shoes and how I would feel if a stranger was a match for me for or for one of my parents,” said Winick. “I was so happy to do it and even happier to hear you’re doing better and feeling better,” she told Ruiz.

The Celebrating Life event, which annually commemorates Gift of Life donors and recipients, gave special recognition to the courageous donors and recipients of 2020 who overcame quarantines, difficult travel conditions and many other obstacles during the pandemic in order to save 240 lives—the most donations in one year for Gift of Life.

**About Gift of Life Marrow Registry**

Gift of Life Marrow Registry is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in Boca Raton, Fla. The organization, established in 1991, is dedicated to saving lives by facilitating bone marrow and blood stem cell transplants for patients with leukemia, lymphoma, and other blood-related diseases. To learn more about Gift of Life Marrow Registry, visit [www.giftoflife.org](http://www.giftoflife.org).

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