



At the State Fairgrounds, Chuck Monteith of Cary shows his children Mallorie and Trey that donating a blood sample doesn't hurt. Mallorie, 6, has been diagnosed with leukemia, although she does not need a bone marrow transplant at this time.

STAFF PHOTO BY GARY ALLEN

Bone marrow drive draws droves

By DEBBI SYKES
STAFF WRITER

They dashed through the rain on their lunch hours, filled out two pages of paperwork and waited in line — all to have a needle plunged in their arm.

But the 2,130 people who became potential bone marrow donors Thursday through an event called Marrowthon '95 weren't complaining.

Take Caroline Stallings, for example: an N.C. State University student whose father donated bone marrow and encouraged her to get involved, too.

"I'm not going to say it didn't hurt," said Stallings, who had to get stuck in both arms before the phlebotomist could collect blood from her. "But it's definitely worth it."

Alexina Anderson, 38, of Raleigh, took time off from work to go to the screening in Chapel Hill.

"Being black, I think [registering] is important because there are so few of us on the register," Anderson said. "If



Michael Hamlin of Durham grimaces as phlebotomist Mydron Jones sticks him at the N.C. Mutual Life Insurance building.

STAFF PHOTO BY ROB CROSS

you can be a donor, you can give someone else a chance at life."

Heath Ritchie of Chapel Hill decided to register after his brother-in-law died of cancer.

"When you are a donor, you are giving something that

doesn't cost you anything," Ritchie, 40, said at University Mall.

Stallings, Anderson and Ritchie were all drawn by one big drive held at several Triangle sites as well as Goldsboro and Fayetteville. Organizers hoped

to add 2,000 potential donors to the National Bone Marrow Registry in one day.

Seventy percent of the people who need a marrow transplant die before a match is found.

"This is like manna from heaven, to have everybody come out like this," said Sharon O'Donnell. Her nephew, Jacob Gunnells, had his life saved by a bone marrow transplant in late 1993.

About one in four people who need bone marrow transplants are able to receive a donation from a family member. But others, like Jacob, need to find a donor in the general population.

If a possible match is found, donors are called in for further screening. Then, if they agree to donate, doctors will remove bone marrow from the donor's hip with a special needle. The operation lasts about 45 minutes, and the donor needs to stay in the hospital for only a few hours.

The more people who register, the better the chances are for