

Young Marines walk 100 miles to support American Cancer Society

BY PFC. ALICIA SMALL
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The Temecula Valley Young Marines, whose commanding officer saved a cancer patient's life, joined 29 other teams and walked for 24 hours during the Annual Relay for Life walk June 24-25 in Temecula, Calif., to support the American Cancer Society.

The goal of the Young Marines was to walk 100 miles in 24 hours.

Members of each team took turns walking until they needed to take a rest break. Each group had a separate cause they supported and different goals for how far and long they walked during the event.

Volunteers started their day by setting up campsites and registering for the day's events. After being welcomed and introduced, survivors walked the Lap of Courage with their caregivers, family and friends. Teams then gathered their crews and took a lap together to commence the walk.

Hiking with a 40-pound pack full of cinder blocks saying it's just a Marine thing, former Marine Michael Guiles, commanding officer of the Temecula Valley Young Marines, grew anxious as the afternoon drew near. He was anxious during the walk because he was going to meet the man whose life he helped save by donating bone marrow more than a year ago.

Brian Moore was diagnosed with aplastic anemia, a bone marrow disorder that can develop into leukemia. He was given a year and one-half to live.

Moore said he was just going through the motions. He had a good job, paid bills and it was like he hit a big bump in the road. He said it took him by surprise, and he just didn't know what happened.

While he was dealing with his disease, his youngest daughter was diagnosed with transposition of the great arteries. She had to undergo reconstructive surgery on her heart. Moore said it was hard to handle his and his daughter's health problems at the same time. Although his daughter's surgery was successful, he said he leaned



The Temecula Valley, Calif., Young Marines walked 100 miles in 24 hours June 24-25 to fight cancer. Pfc. Alicia Small/Chevron

on his wife for the support he needed to make it through.

Providing the break Moore needed, Guiles had donated a small quantity of blood for testing and three weeks later was found to be a perfect match for Moore. Guiles said this was a rare occurrence as he was informed there is a 1 in 10,000 chance to have a match so close. Guiles gave 1.5 liters of bone marrow to Moore during the transplant. The procedure was simple and wasn't painful, said Guiles. He said they sedated him, took the bone marrow and that was all. He said all he got from the procedure was a small bruise.

After six months, Guiles was contacted and told the procedure had been a success. It wasn't until a year after the transplant when the men received contact information for each other and found out they only lived an hour away from each other.

Moore said he just couldn't bring himself to talk to Guiles on the phone.

"What do you say to the man who saved your life?" asked Moore.

Moore said he always wondered what he looked like, what he did for a job, if he had a family and what they were like.

Guiles' wife and family, all involved with the Young Marines program, said they thought of the situation as a miracle. The family said they were proud Guiles was able to help with such an important issue and happy they could have part in it.

At about the six hour mark, obviously tired and

sweaty from the afternoon heat, Guiles and Moore met for the first time. The two shook hands and exchanged gifts. Guiles presented Moore with a challenge coin, which is a traditional gift in the Marine Corps for triumphing over challenges in life. Guiles said Moore deserved it for overcoming his disease.

In return Guiles received a T-shirt Moore bought for him to show his appreciation. The T-shirt was from the foundation from which he received the bone marrow.

Moore said, "Every day I wake up and I'm just blown away. I made it and he did it. I can't thank him enough. I always think, 'What can I do for him? How do I pay him back?' I'm living off of his blood. I've got Marine in my blood now!"

Moore said he believes the thick Marine blood has made him stronger and more dedicated to live his life to the fullest.

Feeling blessed and happy to be alive, Moore said nothing bothers him anymore. He realized it may take a while, but it is possible to get better. He said he wanted everyone who has cancer to know there is hope and not to get discouraged.

When the last Relay for Life team crossed the finish line during the morning hours of June 25, The Young Marines carried an American flag off the field which signified the end of the event.

The Young Marines raised over \$2,100 in contributions for the bone marrow foundation affiliated with the American Cancer Society. All other teams also met their goal for the cause for which they walked.



PLAYOFF TOURNAMENT



Above, Ken Finny, a Marine Corps Community Services player, nails the ball to get the game's first hit against 12th Marine Corps District. Pfc. James Green/Chevron

Left, 12th Marine Corps District first baseman Capt. Michael Bridges rounds the bases to score in a 10-5 win over MCCS. Pfc. Charlie Chavez/Chevron

