Announcer: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap: What would you do if you had the chance to save someone's life? That was a decision A’dja Jones from Missouri State University had to make. In 2014, she registered as a bone marrow donor at a drive on campus. The drive was in aid of MSU softball player Allie Alvstad, who had leukemia. In 2015, Jones got a message that would change her life forever. She was a match for a young child and chose to give him her marrow. I'm Emily Yeap.

In light of National Marrow Awareness Month in November, Jones, assistant director at MSU's Dr. Mary Jo Wynn Academic Achievement Center, joins me today to share her donor experience and advocate for marrow donation.

A’dja Jones: I was running at Sequiota Park, and I happened to check my email. I had an email that said, "You're a match." I was like, "Wow. Okay." The organization we went through was called DKMS. They're an international organization that has a lot of these bone marrow registration drives. So I got an email from them indicating that I was, in fact, a match for a patient. There wasn't a lot of detail at that point. I wasn't really sure what was going on. So I went home, told my mom, and was trying to process that with her. After I finally emailed them back and said, "I'm interested in hearing more about the process," they were able to share with me that the patient was, in fact, a 7-year-old boy.

I think if I had any doubts at that point in time, I definitely wanted to go ahead and do it at that point because, at that time, I have a little sister who is just now 11 years old. She was right about that age. And I also had a cousin who was diagnosed with lymphoma at a very young age, as well. Just sitting there thinking that I would want someone to potentially give them a second chance at life, I decided that I was going to go through the process.

Emily Yeap: Jones completed blood tests and questionnaires in Springfield. The results were good, and she had to undergo a full medical check-up in Washington D.C., the site of her surgery.

A’dja Jones: So I flew to D.C. three weeks after my initial testing. They told me about what the process was going to be like. There are actually two processes. There is one where it is a little more simple, which is a peripheral stem cell donation. That is very similar to a blood draw, where they take it out of one arm. They filter out the stem cells, and then they filter it back through your other arm. That's about how 75% of individuals give bone marrow. There is the other 25%, which is the actual bone marrow surgery. We call it a harvest, which sounds fun and October-ish. Right? And so that just means that they go in through the back of the hip bone and take out the marrow that way just because that's where the stem cells are produced, so it's a little bit stronger. So with it being a child as a patient, they thought it was better off if I went ahead and had that surgery instead of just the peripheral stem cells.

Emily Yeap: In January 2016, Jones underwent the surgery.

A’dja Jones: It was very surreal waking up knowing they had taken out about a liter of fluid out of my hip bone. It all happened relatively quickly, and probably, I'd say, about a month it took me to regain my strength in everything. It's been a year, almost two years, and feeling great. It was very, very much so worth it looking back.

Emily Yeap: Although she doesn't know who the patient is and how he's doing, Jones says she has no regrets.

A’dja Jones: I would go back and do it again. I know I had some hesitation at the beginning. But I mean, they walk you through every step. It's not an easy thing to decide to do. But in another sense, if you have the opportunity to give a little bit of yourself to help someone else, why is that even a question?

Emily Yeap: The need for bone marrow donors is great, and Jones wants people to educate themselves about becoming donors.

A’dja Jones: I was reading through some statistics. It said nationally, there is a need for about 20,000 individuals who need a bone marrow transplant of some sort just in the U.S. every year, and there's even more internationally. The more that you learn about this information, about how much of an impact you can have, about how little that you as the donor has to worry about as far as financial issues and things like that ... We've had quite a few drives here at Missouri State to raise awareness and to get a couple more donors on the registry.

Emily Yeap: Jones and her team of students have planned a donor registration drive for October 26th. It will be held in the Plaster Student Union from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

A’dja Jones: If anyone is interested in learning more about this, we're going to have a booth. And we'll get you registered and everything. Obviously, donations are welcome, too. Always excited to teach more people and to tell them the story. We have the whole Allie Strong movement here at Missouri State, and she inspired a lot of people. We have to keep doing that because, I think, inspiration and hope keeps a lot of this stuff alive.

Emily Yeap: To find out more about the drive, contact Jones at 417-836-6962. For more information about DKMS, visit DKMS.org. I'm Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

Announcer: For more information, contact the Office of University Communications at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at KSMU.org.