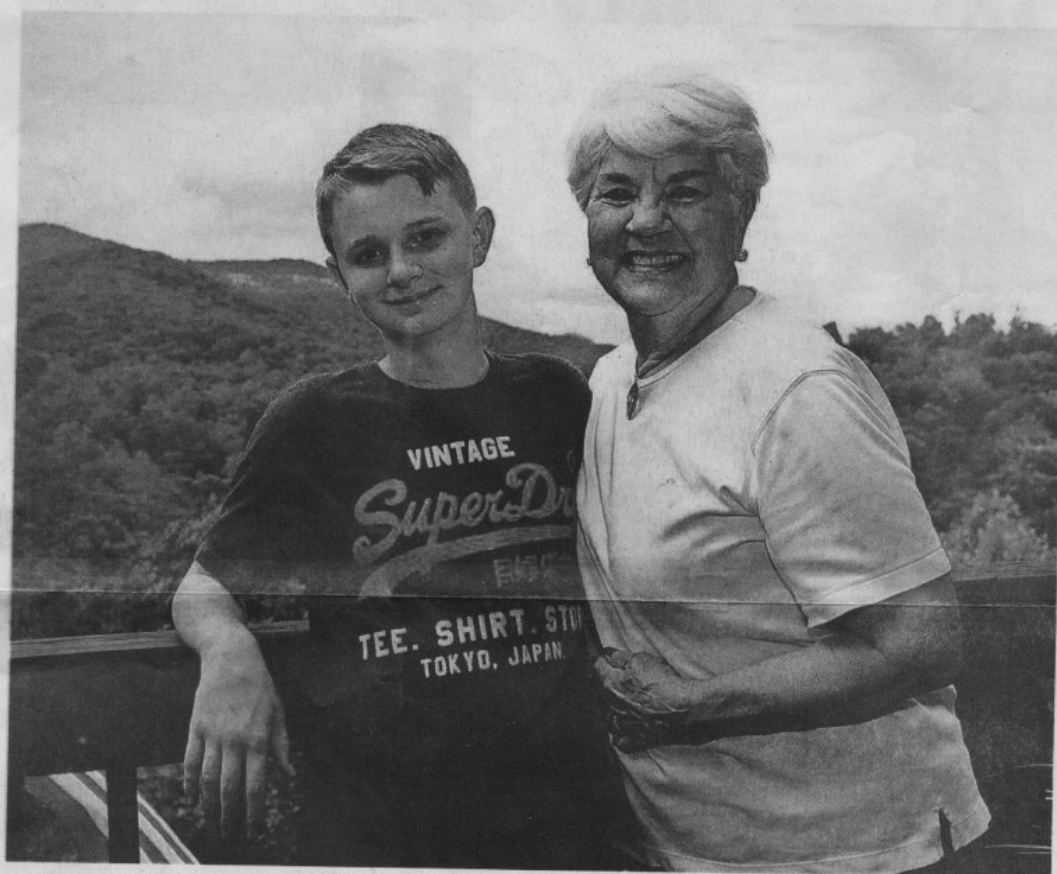


Sue Cole Bone Marrow Donator
Connects with Recipient

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LELAND OUTZ

LONG-AWAITED

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LONG-AWAITED MEETING

Pickens woman connects with bone marrow recipient

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When Aaron Young was two years old, his chances of living to see his next birthday were about one in 40 million.

Those were the odds of his family finding a matching bone marrow donor.

Half a world away, Sue Cole of Pickens was that one in 40 million.

She had signed up as a bone marrow donor eight years earlier because she had a rare blood type and had seen a friend's son suffer from leukemia.

When she got the call, she went under the knife and donated marrow, not knowing who it was going to but only wanting to

“

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Hopefully we'll

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Red Cross, following its confidentiality policies, revealed to the Youngs and the Coles each other's identity.

Over the years they have kept in touch, drawn together by a bond both biological and spiritual. But they had never met – until Friday.

On their first trip to America, the Youngs' first stop after landing in Atlanta was a home overlooking Table Rock Mountain, where they would meet the woman whose selfless act had saved their now 16-year-old son's life.

“They came down the driveway honking the horn,” Sue Cole said. “I said, oh my goodness, it's them!”

“They got out of the car and we ran up to each other. It was wonderful.”

They had arrived two hours earlier

Meeting

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to America two years ago but things didn't work out.

"I honestly had kind of given up hope on meeting them," Sue said. "I really thought that I might have to go to London to meet Aaron, so this means the world to us for them to be here."

Aaron, who just graduated high school and plans to attend Uxbridge College to study health and social care and become a nurse like his older brother, Sean, said he was a bit apprehensive about the visit at first.

"I scared at first, because I don't know her at all," he said. "All I knew was she was the woman that saved me."

"We're only here today because of

Sue," Aaron's mother Jackie said. "And he's definitely only here today because of Sue."

"It's fantastic for us to get here. It's taken far too long," said Aaron's father, Colin. "Hopefully we'll come back.

"Sue and Ben are absolutely fantastic people. We couldn't wish to meet nicer people.

"Thank you to Sue for the donation. Thank you, Sue."

The miracle of this meeting and the lifesaving event that precipitated it almost didn't happen.

In order for the bone marrow transplant to be effective, the cancer had to be out of Aaron's body. And at the time the treatments had reached that point, he had contracted a virus that made the procedure extremely risky.

"But we decided we would risk it," his mother said. "We knew that Sue was our

only chance."

Although he had a one in four chance of matching one of his siblings, he didn't make those odds. Procedures to use parents' bone marrow at the time were only experimental and not considered reliable.

Sue and her husband, Ben, were living in Charleston at the time the call came that a patient who matched her bone marrow was in need.

She went through three months of tests. Restrictions were placed on her activities so her health would be just right.

On Dec. 18, 2001, the procedure was done. Marrow was taken from Sue's spine and rushed to London, where it arrived within 24 hours.

She was 60 years old at the time. She wouldn't have been allowed to donate at that age in Britain, the Youngs said.

"I did not know where it was going,

who it was going to," Sue said.

Aaron's treatment was simpler, much like a blood transfusion.

Soon, he was getting better. Other than some high frequency hearing loss and a smaller frame than he may have had otherwise, he is a healthy, normal teenage English kid.

He shared photos with the Coles of his growing up, playing the game we call soccer, and other such things British kids do.

Sue and Ben have four granddaughters, and now, it feels like they have a grandson, too.

"Aaron is my other grandson that I never had," Sue said.

For Aaron, it was like coming home to a place he had never been.

"He's always known he was made in America," his mother said.

