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TU Students Join Fight Against Leukemia

Jared Kaltwasser, News Editor

Students at The University of Tulsa will get the opportunity this week to participate in a different kind of fight – the fight against leukemia and lymphoma. Two events aimed at helping leukemia research will occur around the TU campus this week as part of the annual event,

“FALL for Ryan.” FALL stands for “Fight Against Leukemia and Lymphoma,” and the name Ryan is from Ryan Gibson, a promising medical student whose life was taken by leukemia in 2001. The events are part of a set of annual events set up by the leukemia advocacy group named for Gibson, the Ryan Gibson Foundation.

Local event coordinator Jaymee Angel says she hopes the event can get people involved in the fight against leukemia for years to come.

“These events are opportunities for people to get involved in the fight both now and for the future,” Angel said.

Two events will take place in the TU community as part of FALL for Ryan. The first, on Wednesday February 25, is a blood and bone mar-row drive in the lobby of the Reynolds Center. The drive is sponsored by Red Cross Blood Services and the National Marrow Donor Program. Students and anyone over the age of 17 are invited to come and donate blood. But the unique part about this blood drive is that students will also have the opportunity to register with the National Marrow Donor Program for free. The marrow donation program is an especially important aspect of the event, accord-ing to Angel.

“The important thing to realize is that 30,000 adults and children each year are diagnosed with a stem cell disease for which they will need a transplant, out of that 30,000 people only 30 percent will find a match within their families, so 70 percent rely on the selfless acts of strangers,” Angel said. The second event will take place on Friday, February 27 at the Hardwood Bar and Grill. This event is a fundraiser for the organization. Singers/songwriters Steve Liddell, Jesse Aycock, Caleb Sanderson and Cody Murphy will be performing an all-acoustic show. Raffles will also be taking place throughout the night.

Angel says the Ryan Gibson Foundation does very important work in the specific fight to eradicate leukemia.

“The only cure to date for a stem cell disease is a bone marrow transplant, but they are toxic to the body and the Ryan Gibson Foundation funds research to expand on what has already been done so that the transplants are not so toxic and have a higher success rate,” Angel said.

The case of Gibson, the namesake for the event is one that hits especially close to home for those in the TU area. Gibson was a native of Springdale, AR where he was his high school student body president. From there, Gibson went on to be an

honor student at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. After graduating cum laude. Gibson began working with Baylor Health System in a joint cancer project with the University of Texas Southwestern while waiting to begin medical school. Gibson had been accepted to the medical schools at the University of Arkansas, University of Texas Southwestern and Duke University. Leukemia, however, would not allow Gibson to attend those schools.

The Ryan Gibson Foundation, based out of Dallas was formed after his death in 2001. The non-profit organization makes it clear that they have but one goal, “to find a cure for leukemia.”

Anyone who would like to help the ongoing fight against the disease, which kills an estimated 160 per day is encouraged to attend one or both of the two events. For more information on the Ryan Gibson Foundation, visit their website at www.RyanGibsonFoundation.org.

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