Hope is not far from a few Q-tips, blood donations and the love of family.

On March 31, Marshall Matlock, OSU alum, was diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia, which is cancer of the blood and bone marrow.

Matlock said he was surprised to hear the news.

“I didn’t feel like there was anything wrong,” he said.

But after he continued to feel pain in his right knee, doctors discovered  cancer.

Matlock began chemotherapy, but later discovered the only cure is a bone marrow transplant.

“Only about two out of 10 people that need a transplant find a donor,” said Rebecca Burt,

Matlock’s sister.

Burt, who graduated from OSU in 2003, said the family began looking for a match for Matlock on a Monday and found one that Friday.

Since then, they have found two other matches in case his body rejects the first donor’s bone marrow.

Matlock is scheduled to have the transplant Aug. 31 at the University of Kansas Medical Center, Burt said.

“We were really downhearted,” she said. “But now that they have a match, it’s a lifesaver for him. It’s really changed things.”

Even though a match had been found, Matlock’s family had already planned to pair with the Oklahoma Blood Institute’s blood drive scheduled for this week.

The drive will be in the Student Union Starlight Terrace from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Friday.

The blood drive is open to anyone older than 17 who is willing to give blood. Be the Match is looking for people between 18 and 60.

OBI is the Oklahoma affiliate of the Be The Match Foundation, an organization that raises money and helps find donors for patients with leukemia.   

Kristi Johnson, OBI blood program consultant, said every year about 10,000 Americans are diagnosed with a disease where the only cure is a bone marrow transfusion.

Burt said people have many misconceptions about donating bone marrow.

“They think they have to drill into their hip,” she said. “But what they really do is take blood out with an IV and put it in a spinner to spin out the stem cells that they need, then put everything else back into their blood.”

Registering to become a bone marrow donor is simple, Burt said. 

A donor is required to fill out paperwork and then wipe four Q-tips — one for each quadrant of the mouth — between the gum and the cheek to get saliva and DNA.

Those interested in registering for Be The Match  should register at the drive because registration is free when the usual cost to register is around $35, Burt said.

She said their family and friends are happy to be a part of the cause.

“We felt it’s just kind of a pay it forward,” she said. “We found him a match, now we need to help all those other people that need to find matches, too.”

Matlock family friend, Natalea Watkins, said a group of her friends decided they needed to find a way to financially support Matlock’s parents, Peggy and Randy Matlock.

Watkins and her friends began the Matlock Angel Fund and paired up with the Red Crown Federal Credit Union in Tulsa to raise money for the family.

Watkins said the donations began with an e-mail sent to about 30 or 40 close friends from college that has been passed on to others.

“I bet it’s now gone to hundreds,” she said.

Their goal of raising $3,000 has been surpassed with almost $7,000 raised, and Watkins said she is proud of the people who have given their support.

“Connections for life,“ she said. “It’s just the OSU way.”

Matlock said he was grateful for his family’s and friends’ support even though he is away in Kansas City and his family is in Oklahoma City.

“Whenever I needed someone here, I always had a family member with me,” Matlock said. “I felt like I was really fortunate.”

He also said he feels like others can learn from his story.

“Hopefully I can learn something from it and raise awareness,” he said.