

## Basketball icon leads national campaign for Be The Match

### Shaquille O'Neal challenges the public to step up and save a life

**Minneapolis -- March 8, 2010**

Shaquille O'Neal has teamed up with Be The Match<sup>®</sup> to tell the nation about the critical need for more bone marrow donors. In the Do Something Big<sup>SM</sup> campaign, the basketball superstar will challenge Americans to "Be the one to save a life." Three public service announcements will hit the airwaves and the Internet starting in March.

#### Nothing's bigger than life

"There's nothing bigger than life – not when someone you love is fighting to live," O'Neal said. "That's why I'm letting people know they have the power to save a life by joining the Be The Match Registry<sup>®</sup>."

For thousands of people battling leukemia, lymphoma, sickle cell disease and other life-threatening diseases, a bone marrow transplant offers their best – or only – hope for a cure. Seventy percent of these patients don't have a matching donor in their families, so they depend on the Be The Match Registry, the world's largest and most diverse listing of potential marrow donors, to find that life-saving match.

"Shaq is an American icon who's respected for his talents, on and off the court," said Jeffrey W. Chell, M.D., chief executive officer of the National Marrow Donor Program<sup>®</sup> (NMDP), which operates the Be The Match Registry. "We're honored that he is championing our mission and advocating for the patients who are searching for a marrow match."

#### PSA campaign

O'Neal speaks solo in the first spot (see video tab above). In another, he is joined by both Coach Dale Brown – O'Neal's longtime mentor and former coach at Louisiana State University (LSU) – and Coach Trent Johnson, LSU's current basketball coach. See "[Be the Difference](#)" on YouTube.

In the final spot, Johnson and O'Neal pair up to make a special appeal for African Americans, like themselves, to volunteer as donors. "We need more African Americans to step up," Johnson says. "You can be the match." See "[The Challenge](#)" on YouTube.

## Providing hope

Patients are more likely to match someone from their own race or ethnicity. That means adding more donors to the registry – especially from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds – increases the likelihood that all patients will find the donor they need.

For example, 15-year-old Taylor John has severe sickle cell disease; her best hope for a cure is a marrow transplant. Like 70 percent of patients, Taylor does not have a matching donor in her family. She is most likely to match another African American.

“Together we can provide hope to patients of every age and race – that power is within everyone’s reach,” said O’Neal. “Take the first step at [BeTheMatch.org](http://BeTheMatch.org).” **More:** [Do Something Big](#).

## About Be The Match

Be The Match is a movement that engages a growing community of people inspired to help patients who need an unrelated marrow or umbilical cord blood transplant. The National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP), a leader in the field of marrow and cord blood transplantation, created Be The Match to provide opportunities for the public to become involved in saving the lives of people with leukemia, lymphoma and other life-threatening diseases. Volunteers can join the Be The Match Registry – the world’s largest and most diverse listing of potential marrow donors and donated cord blood units – as well as contribute financially to Be The Match Foundation<sup>SM</sup> or give their time. For more information, visit [BeTheMatch.org](http://BeTheMatch.org) or call

1 (800) MARROW-2.

[http://www.marrow.org/NEWS/News\\_Releases/2010/Do\\_Something\\_Big/Do\\_Something\\_Big\\_Lau.html](http://www.marrow.org/NEWS/News_Releases/2010/Do_Something_Big/Do_Something_Big_Lau.html)