

# The Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County

WWW.SCDFOC.ORG

## Orange County woman crusades for Red Cross, using her own family as an example

BY LANDON HALL  
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Star Simmons says her son is luckier than many people who have sickle-cell disease. He still has all of his organs.

Charon Simmons has made it to age 20 through a combination of pain medication, regular checkups, healthy diet, physical fitness, positive attitude and two loving, fiercely protective parents. Just as important, on five occasions he received blood transfusions to jump-start his bone marrow into cranking out new red blood cells. Sickle Cell, an incurable disease that affects about 70,000 people nationwide, most of them black, has an enemy and an educator in Star Simmons. As part of her crusade, she urges people to give blood whenever they're able. Working with the local chapter of the American Red Cross, she personally signed up about 80 people to donate at The Register's blood drive Wednesday.

The event will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. inside Hoiles Auditorium, at 625 N. Grand Avenue in Santa Ana.

"Giving blood is the most priceless thing," said Star, who lives in Mission Viejo. "If you give blood to someone, it costs you nothing; you'll get it back in a few days. And



that little blood that you give today can save so many people's lives."

Sickle-cell disease is a genetic mutation in red blood cells, which carry oxygen throughout the body. The mutation causes the normally round, smooth cells to twist and spike, often into the shape of a sickle. This makes them get caught inside arteries and veins, slowing blood flow. The diminished oxygen can cause extreme pain in tissue and organs.

Sickle-cell anemia is a specific form of the disease. Charon and his sister Alyssa, 7, both have the most severe kind, since both their parents have the sickle-cell trait. Charon is in pain much of the time, while Alyssa's problem lies in the blood vessels of her head, making her vulnerable to stroke. The median life expectancy for men with the disease is 42; for women it's 48.

Star was born in Memphis but grew up in Orange County, where the relatively small black population meant that she didn't hear much about sickle cell. She and her husband, Elliott, married as teens (after a two-week courtship), and Charon was born four years later. He was diagnosed with sickle cell at age 5.

Charon has been in and out of hospitals ever since, often for weeks at a time. That didn't stop him from being a standout jumper on the Mater Dei High School track team, while earning a 3.5 GPA. He's now a junior at the University of Arizona, where he's studying to be a dentist. He has also started his own graphics and design company.

"I take care of my health pretty well, but there's no way that I would have lived the life that I have now were it not for my mother," Charon



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- SCDFOC urges others to give blood
- Sickle Cell Disease and IEP Plans
- Give and make a difference
- Saving our community, one at a time

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**"I felt that was just confirmation that my family was going to be used as a vessel to help many people"**

said by phone. "Most families, the fathers are like the protector of the house, the backbone. But when it comes to my health, I've always been a mama's boy."

Alyssa, active and more outgoing than Charon, was diagnosed with the disease when she was still in the womb. "It was almost like a blessing in disguise; it wasn't a curse," Star said. "I felt that was just confirmation that my family was going to be used as a vessel to help many people."

In 2006 she started the Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County. She raises awareness about the disease and, with help from the volunteers at Irvine High School, visits patients at hospitals.



Charon flies home once a month to see his hematologist. He said a couple of his friends who have sickle cell get two or three blood transfusions a month, but he hasn't needed one since he was 18. "Most kids by the age of 12 have the spleen removed, but Charon has never had any organs removed," Star said, thankful for small victories.

But she knows it's only a matter of time before both her children need transfusions, which is why it's important to keep the supply replenished.

"Your blood can go a very long way," she said. "It's important to have it there, because when the time comes when people need it, they don't have time to



Monty Starks ( Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and Star Simmons (President & Founder of SCDFOC)

wait."

*2009 Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County Blood Drive, held on Oct 28th, at The Orange County Register.*

## Donations are a vital part of The SCDFOC Life

One of the Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange county's main source of funds is through donations from the public. Without them, we would be unable to finance the essential welfare, education, and support services that we offer. We ask you to become a donor to-

day and join the Donor Hall of Fame!

You can give online by going to our website at: [www.SCDFOC.org](http://www.SCDFOC.org) and select donations! We appreciate all your support and thank you for sowing onto good soil, We know you

have a choice when giving and we thank you for choosing us! May everything your hands touch, prosper!

## In Loving Memory of.....Jameel Oliver

Each year, the Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County selects a hero or fallen hero from our foundation to salute. This year our salute goes to , Jameel Oliver. Jammel lost his battle with sickle cell disease in 2007, due to not having the blood he needed for a must needed blood transfusion.

It is vitally important that we as individuals give blood. It doesn't cost anything

to give blood, but one pint of blood could make a major difference in saving a life! The Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County will hold two blood drives a year, one in February and one in October. We are asking everyone to come out ant give blood.

Go to our website and register to become a Blood Donor today and receive the best reward! Giving Life!



Jameel Oliver and mother Olsey Espinosa  
July 29, 1983 to April 7, 2007



## "Joy In Our Town" Trinity Broadcast Network

On December 9th, 2009, The SCDFOC was invited by Trinity Broadcast Network to come and speak about Sickle Cell Disease and how it affect approx 70,000 to 100,000 Americans today.

As a mother of two children affected by sickle cell disease, an advocate and Founder of the SCDFOC, I was humbled to have been given such an wonderful invitation. I have dealt with pretty much all the challenges that come along with Sickle Cell Disease and to have the opportunity to reach many others around the world and know that I can possibly be helping others, it is truly a beautiful thing.

I would like to thank the entire staff at TBN

and I speak prosperity, wealth, increase, empowerment, and much success to the TBN staff, family, friends, and all those who are connected to them.

I would like to also thank Dr. Carolyn Rowley of The Cayenne Wellness Center in Culver City, CA and Professor Ernie Bridges of The Omega Psi, Phi, and Cal State Fullerton African Studies, for joining me and giving insight from how Sickle Cell Disease was birthed and the possible cure and advancement on medical treatments.

This program will be airing on TBN on Jan 1st at 10 am, and Jan 4th at 8:30 am. On KTBN.



**Star Simmons/President & Founder of The Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County, Dr. Carolyn Rowley/Cayenne Wellness Center, Culver City, CA, and Professor Ernie Bridges of Cal State Fullerton University.**

## Barnes and Noble give to Local Charity



Barnes & Nobles Charity Gift Wrap Program at The Irvine Spectrum selected The Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County to be one of its recipients for giving donations to local charities.

It was such a blessing to be able to meet and great so many wonderful people. We at the Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County, would like to say thank you to everyone who gave their donations and made it an wonderful experience.

All proceeds from the Charity Gift Wrap Program will be allocated to our "All About

Tots" Program and Services.

I would like to thank everyone who came out and gave their time to wrap and give to others. Our volunteers are the best!

We look forward to working again with Barnes and Nobles and thank you for your donations!

### **Proverbs 14:31**

"He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God."



## Sickle Cell Foundation Of Orange County give back to Fountain Valley Regional Hospital



**From Right to Left (Charon Simmons/Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County Spokesperson, Monty Starks/Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Volunteers, and Professor Ernie Bridges of Cal State Fullerton University and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity), all come together on December 5th, to spread a little Holiday Joy!**

As a patient of Fountain Valley Regional Hospital for the past fifteen years, Charon Simmons never thought he would ever be in the hospital without being a patient.

Charon is a patient of FVRH, due to having Sickle Cell Disease and he knows first hand what it is like to be in the hospital for long lengths of time.

As Spokesperson of the Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County, he decided that he wanted his voice to be heard in a different way, by giving back to those who played a key part in creating who he is today.

The entire staff of Pediatrics and Pediatrics ICU made a major difference in my recovery and stay at foundation valley. Since I was five years old, I have been in and out the hospital so many times, it actually became my first home. It was very hard on my parents and me. They had to come and be with me all the time because they did not want me to be with strangers. I felt bad for them because I didn't want them to suf-

fer because I was suffering. As time went on, my parents and I begin to build trust and relationships with the staff at FVRH and found out that they were just as concerned for my health. The nurses made me feel so comfortable and always tried to keep my spirit man uplifted.

We have seen the hospital grow in so many different ways, but what is so great about growth is change! It has proven to be one of the best hospitals in Orange County. With all of my doctors being partners with Fountain Valley Regional Hospital, it has allowed my family to be more confident about it services.

People don't realize that your nursing staff play more of a vital role than the type of hospital your in. "It is not only about physical recovery but more of a state of mind", says Charon Simmons. You can be in the best hospital in the world, but if the nursing staff is rude and not compassionate, that can make a huge impact on your re-

covery and your future stays. People always ask, why we travel so far to be at this hospital? We tell them, "Service is everything".

This is why, we chose to give back to Fountain Valley Regional Hospital. Through our Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County, Our alma matta is "**Live by Design and Not by Diagnosis**" Which means exactly what it says. You have a choice and do not allow anyone or anything to stop you from walking in your purpose and destiny.

"Operation Bring A Smile", is about bringing smiles to those who feel that they have nothing to smile about. I use my life, my challenges with Sickle Cell Disease and I challenge them to take that step and smiling for what is about to happen in their lives and not frown upon what has happened in the past.

If you would like to donate to this cause, please logo onto our website at: [www.SCDFOC.org](http://www.SCDFOC.org) and donate today! Make a difference and Bring A Smile!

KiKi Sheppard & SCDFOC Founder/  
Star Simmons



Comedian Henry Coleman



Elliott Simmons/Vice President of  
SCDFOC and The Legendary Four Tops

SCDFOC Spokesperson/Charon  
Simmons & KiKi Sheppard



Singer/Songwriter Mary Coppin and Star  
Simmons/Founder & President of SCDFOC

Honoree Brian Patterson of "The High  
Class Genetics" and Charon Simmons



Featuring Phil Gates Blues Band



Elliott & Star Simmons, Dawn Lewis, Star Simmons, KiKi  
Sheppard and Lisa Humphrey

## The Legendary Four Tops Performs for "Sunset Cruise for A Cause"



On November 7th, 2009, The SCDFOC hosted its Annual Black Tie Event on the "Entertainer Yacht" out of Newport Beach, CA. The fundraiser even had something for everyone. The cruise supplied great entertainers such as "the Legendary Four Tops, Phil Gates Blues Band, Comedian Henry Coleman, celebrity guest appearances by Singer/Songwriter Mary Coppin, Actress KiKi Sheppard of The KIS Foundation, Actress Dawn Lewis, Actor Bobbie Gene, and

many more.

Entertainment included Salsa Dancing, Live Comedy, Celebrity Poker, Dining, and Dancing. This event was a huge success!

Each year the Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County host its Annual Events to raise money for its charity which provide support services such as but not limited to doctor referral programs, transportation to doctor appointments,

tutoring services, college preparation, social services, hospital visitations, gifts for patients, and much more.

To get involve and learn how you can give to help the SCDFOC services, go to [www.SCDFOC.org](http://www.SCDFOC.org) and donate today!

The SCDFOC would like to thank everyone who came out and supported the "Sunset Cruise for A Cause" and we look forward to next years event!



### SCDFOC Online Store!

We are proud to announce our online store. Coming January 2010, The Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County will be presenting its online store.

We will be offering sickle cell t-shirts, lip balm, bottled water, dvd for education, and much more.

We hope that you will shop online at our stop and allow your money to go to a worthy cause. All donations will go toward our educational and support services.

We thank you for all your support and look forward to partnering with you in the future!



**SCDFOC Lip balm, comes in four different flavors \$2 ea**



## 2010 Events

Heart to Heart “Bringing Hearts together for the same Cause”

**(February 13th, 2010)**

Celebrating Life “Living by Design and Not by Diagnosis”

**(April 17th, 2010)**

**(March 28th, June 26th, Sept 25th, and Dec 18th, 2010)**

Organic Soul~ A Soulful Event

**(June 19th, 2010)**

“Walk for Another Day” Walk-a-thon

**(September 18th, 2010)**

Support Group Meetings

SCDFOC Annual Food Drive

**(Oct 1st, 2010 through Dec 1st, 2010)**

2010 Annual Black Tie Event

**(December 4th, 2010)**

Holiday Giving Party

**(Local Hospitals:: Nov 13th, Nov 27th, Dec 11th, and Dec 18th, 2010)**

## SCDFOC Walk-a-thon

The SCDFOC held its annual walk-a-thon on Sunday, October 4th, at The Irvine Heritage park. This year event was held “In Loving Memory of .Jameel Oliver”.

With the support of Quest Diagnostics, Irvine High School national Honors Society, Silpada, Santa Ana Black Historical Society, Bobbie Gene’s Club House, and many more, this event was a success!

The foundation receive donations from Adam Gillis , The Irvine High School National Honors Society, Quest Diagnostics, Olsey Espinosa, The High Class Genetics, and others. With such generous donations, the foundation raised over \$12k and have over 150 in attendance. Great job for our First Annual Walk-a-thon!

Next year is sure to be a blast. A special thanks goes out to The Irvine High School National Honors Society Volunteers, be-

cause of their professionalism, dedication to the cause and great support, we had a beautiful outcome.

We look forward to continuously working with Irvine High School and showing that great things can come from those right in the classroom. Thanks again for all your support and dedication to our cause and foundation!



Sincerely,

Star Simmons/President & Founder





**"President & Founder  
Star Simmons**

The SCDFOC is committed to increasing the public's awareness about sickle cell disease; through educational seminars, workshops, community-based activities, and other support programs.

It is because of your generous donations and unselfishness to give, that has allowed us to be the pillar for those suffering by the complications of sickle cell disease. My family and I, truly appreciate and are humble for your loving response and immediate desire to give to those who are affected by the disease.

We pray and believe with your continuous support, that 2010 will be a year of explosive giving and prosperous returns!

Thank you again for all your support and we look forward to partnering with you in the New Year!

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