

# Thalassemia Retreat 2006

*By Liliana Macri*

Hi, I'm Liliana. I am a 38-year-old woman. I have beta-thalassemia major, and I've been getting blood since I was 6 months of age. I have been coming to Children's Hospital Oakland since December 2005. Since then, I have met a lot of wonderful people, including doctors, nurses, and other thalassemia patients. This leads me to tell you about this year's thalassemia retreat in November 2006. WOW! Let me tell you that it was one of the best experiences that I have had in a long time. I really loved the fact that the patients were able to bring loved ones--a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a sister, a husband, and even some of their kids. Sitting in the group circle and listening to every one talk about themselves was my favorite part: how patients and loved ones expressed their thoughts, tears, laughs, and fears, sharing the parts of the disease that our outside friends and family cannot understand, such as when you're really feeling down on the day they happen to ask, "What's wrong?" and you just simply smile and say nothing, because they are not aware of all the challenges that having thalassemia involves. The retreat held impact for all of those who attended. We came from near home and out of state for this wonderful retreat. Thank you to each and every one of you who attended! You have made memories for me that I am proud of, and I am already looking forward to next year's retreat. Oh, and to Laurice Levine, who organized the event: What can I say? You truly are the captain of the ship! You do go the extra mile, and we will never let you sink, girl--we are all still above water and always will be with you around. Like Tupac Shakur said, "Hold your head up!"

Thanx 2 all,  
Liliana Macri, 2006