

Fast facts for recruiting donors

- Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood.
- The need for blood is constant – not just when supplies are low.
- Nearly 70 percent of people will need a blood transfusion in their lifetime, yet just a small percent of eligible donors give.
- If everyone who donates blood once a year would give twice a year, blood shortages could be a thing of the past.
- One blood donation could help save up to three lives.
- Each whole blood donation may be divided into its components: red cells, plasma and platelets.
- There is no upper age limit for blood donation.
- Blood for transfusion is tested for transmittable diseases. Sterile, single use needles are used to prevent transmission of HIV and other infectious diseases.
- If you believe you can't give because of medication you are taking, check with a physician or a qualified Red Cross staff person. Many medical conditions and medications do not prevent you from donating.

Got questions on eligibility?
Call our donor eligibility hotline at 1-877-835-5736.

With spring on the horizon, thoughts turn to all things fresh and new. So why not focus on reaching out to communities that may not have been asked to give before? Simply put, we need blood donors of all ethnic backgrounds to give on a regular basis. With some diseases, like sickle cell, blood needs to be matched as closely as possible to the recipient. Is there a way you can create more diversity in your own blood drives? Think about it. You may surprise yourself with your own answer.

Think, too, about our next generation of blood donors. Many high school and college students will be graduating soon, and we want to be sure they continue donating. Giving blood is a responsible habit, so please encourage it at every opportunity. As an **American Red Cross** blood drive sponsor, you are fulfilling an important role in our community. We thank you for the drives you have on the books, and encourage you to schedule additional drives if you can. Call us anytime: **1-800-GIVE LIFE**.

Why we give: Skylar's story

Christine Stevens used to go to sleep thinking about the people she saw on TV commercials. She felt the pain. She wanted to help. As a parent, she internalized the stories of children and families fighting cancer.

"But one morning I woke up and realized we were those people," says Christine of the first few weeks after her young daughter was diagnosed with leukemia. "I had to believe that there were good people out there who would help pull us through."



Sam and Skylar

Now, two years later, Christine is saying thank you to everyone who helped during **Skylar's** battle with **acute lymphoblastic leukemia**. In February, she'll sponsor her first blood drive through the **American Red Cross**. She's holding the drive to celebrate the end of Skylar's chemotherapy and her victory over cancer. But she's also holding the drive to reach out to other families whose children are fighting serious disease.

"Our hand is reaching out to help now," says Christine. "Any family we run across now, we want to be there to help."

Four days before her 8th birthday, Skylar landed in the hospital. Her mother thought she had appendicitis. Or maybe a touch of the flu. Doctors ran blood tests and took a chest X-ray. The results were more than anyone expected.

"We had no idea what was going on," says Christine of when doctors sat her down and told her it wasn't good. "All I could think was *my kid has cancer*. It was hard to hear anything else."

Skylar's care involved seven months of **high dose chemotherapy**, and injections into her spinal fluid every three months. When the treatments pushed her into remission, she began taking chemo medications daily by mouth.

"She's really coped well and has been extremely positive," Christine says. "We've always told her you can do it. And we try to have fun with whatever she can do. Even when she lost her hair, we said *how many mommies give you scissors to cut your hair?* She gave herself bobs until no hair was left."

Today, 10-year-old Skylar has **completed her chemotherapy** and has a full head of wavy red hair. She just went off her special diet, and is looking forward to eating big salads, fruits, vegetables and especially, strawberries. She's also excited to do all the things she's missed in the past two years: swimming, snorkeling and jumping in a big mud pit in her back yard.

"Honestly, her illness never really slowed her down," says Christine. "Even when her blood counts were low, and she had to go in for a transfusion, she was in the living room doing jumping jacks. She's the one who makes us all laugh and keeps our spirits up."

Skylar's blood drive is scheduled for the day before Valentine's Day at her grandfather's banquet hall in Marshall. Her big sister, Sierra, will be there, although Christine says they will need to leave Sam, her Great Pyrenees, at home. The drive is also in honor of Estevan Sanchez, a fourth-grader in Christine's community, who was recently diagnosed with brain cancer.

Young blood

In Michigan . . .

- Students in high school represent 13 percent of all blood drive sponsors—or 406 out of 3,217 sponsors.
- High school sponsors average two blood drives a year.
- Ten percent of all blood donors are 17 and 18 years old.
- About 29 percent of 17- and 18-year-olds make a second donation in a calendar year—compared to 21 percent of all blood donors.
- The average goal of a high school drive is 57—versus 40 for other sponsor groups.
- About 11 percent of the blood supply is collected at high schools.

Remember . . .

- People 45 and older make up more than half of blood donors through the American Red Cross.
- In the last couple years, the first wave of America's largest population group—the baby boomers—turned 60.
- People 69 and older comprise about 10 to 15 percent of the population, but use about 50 percent of all blood transfused.
- Blood needs are on the rise as an aging population increasingly requires medical care that involves the use of blood products.
- It's paramount to recruit and retain a new generation of donors as our population ages.

Donors deferred?

Try these simple steps to boost iron

As a blood drive sponsor, you probably get lots of questions . . . especially when some of the people you asked to give are asked to come back and try another time.

Donors may be **deferred** for a variety of reasons, but probably the most common is for **low iron count**. Iron levels fluctuate daily, and fortunately, donors may have the ability to improve their levels by choosing foods rich in iron. Some of those foods include:

- Red meat
- Fish, poultry or liver
- Beans
- Iron-fortified cereals
- Raisins or prunes
- Dark leafy greens such as spinach

If you eat iron-rich foods along with those that provide plenty of **Vitamin C**, your body can absorb the iron better. Other simple steps to helping ensure a successful donation include:



- Getting a good night's sleep
- Eating a good breakfast or lunch
- Avoiding tea, coffee or other caffeinated beverages
- Drinking extra water and fluids a few hours before donating

Beginning in mid-December, the American Red Cross in Michigan started contacting donors previously deferred for low iron. We provided these simple suggestions and encouraged them not to feel discouraged about their recent donation experience. The mailings will run through mid-spring, and will reach about 300 donors a week. Our hopes are to reconnect with donors, and invite them to try giving blood again.

Questions? Want to share your ideas or success stories related to donor recruitment? Contact **Ann Kammerer** at **517-318-7360** or **kammerera@usa.redcross.org**

A sponsor's story: Buff Whelan Chevrolet

Buff Whelan Chevrolet had a desire to give back to the community that had been so good to them over the years. So in 2002, the auto dealership placed a call to the American Red Cross and started a partnership that helps save lives to this day.



Red Cross staff Bridget McCormick and Tom Bechtell of Buff Whelan

Buff Whelan Chevrolet has hosted blood drives in their show room at 18 Mile Road and Van Dyke for more than six years.

"Things were going well for us business-wise," says **Tom Bechtell**, manager of new car sales and blood drive coordinator. "We asked ourselves what we could do to give back to the community. That's when we decided to contact the Red Cross."

That first year, the dealership held five blood drives. They later switched to holding **quarterly drives** so the timing was more predictable. For their regular blood donors, Tom says, that type of schedule was easier to remember.

"It's automatic," he says. "The first Friday of every quarter."

The consistency of the drives is among the things contributing to Buff Whelan's ongoing success as a blood drive sponsor. Each blood drive brings in an **average of 200 units of blood**, a remarkable growth from their first drive which brought in 28 units.

"We compete with ourselves," explains Tom. "We want to beat our own numbers with every drive."

Buff Whelan Chevrolet invests quite a lot in their "competition." Those investments include valuable staff time to organize and staff the drives, a media partnership with radio station **WYCD**, and donor incentives such as free oil changes, food, and tickets to sporting events and concerts.

The hard work has paid off. At the last blood drive in **December**, Buff Whelan collected **259 units of blood from 280 presenting donors**—17 of whom were first-time donors.

Tom commends all the people who came forward to donate blood. "The generosity of American people is inspiring. By giving just this one gift, they are able to help save up to three lives. That's pretty awesome."

'Round the Region

This section highlights high achievers and innovators from our recent quarter.

West Branch. This tiny town in Ogemaw County has put up some big numbers. From June through September, four sponsors collected 287 pints of blood through seven drives, and brought 116 first-time donors. Much of the success is rooted in the community's support of **Carol Gormley**, a leukemia patient. "Her family and friends are committed to making sure there is a safe and adequate amount of blood for her and for others," says Red Cross staff **Colleen O'Callaghan**. West Branch blood drive sponsors include the **Knights of Columbus, Calvary Baptist Church, Sandvik Hard Materials, and West Branch Regional Medical Center.**

Hillsdale High School. Thanks to clever recruiting, **Hillsdale Hornets** collected the most blood ever at their annual drive. Students capitalized on Thanksgiving by using the theme *Give Thanks, Save Lives*, and visited classes in costumes. Among the characters walking the halls, says student coordinator **Amelia Games**, were the school mascot, a turkey and a giant blood drop.



Hillsdale High recruiters

First United Methodist Church. Donors through this Howell church get the red carpet treatment thanks to volunteer **Audrey Murray**. Audrey keeps a list of all her donors, and when one reaches a milestone, she's there, ringing a bell and presenting a pin. Word has it that the egg salad sandwich she makes for the canteen is the best in the county.

Jasper Bible Church. Family and friends gathered at this first-time drive in memory of **Roxanne Willnow**, one of three identical triplets who passed away two years ago. "It was a great way to memorialize my sister and to help others in need," says **Renee Bangerter**, who coordinated the



Jamie with her aunt and blood donor Renee

November drive with her sister **Ronda Winans**. Nearly 110 people came to the drive, including Roxanne's 8-year-old daughter **Jamie**, and husband **Rob**. The drive featured a

memorial area where people could light a candle for Roxanne, and remember her through pictures. "We plan to do it again," says Renee.

Saginaw County Chapter. When the **Saginaw County Chamber's 2008 Leadership Class** graduated, they knew they wanted to stay involved in community projects. The class sponsored a blood drive at the **Saginaw County Red Cross**

Chapter, and thanks to commitment and teamwork, it turned out to be the Chapter's most successful drive to date. "This was truly an example of leadership in action," says **Jody Botwright**, Leadership graduate and Chapter Executive Director.

Lansing Catholic High School. The first drive of the academic year exceeded all expectations, thanks to the hard work of officers of the **National Honor Society**. Recruitment efforts included sending personal messages to eligible donors and making daily announcements over the school's PA system. "It also helped to ask someone if they were planning to donate when you passed them in the hall," says student coordinator **Nick Lemmer**. Other NHS members involved included **Sarah Swiderski, Austin Nichols, Michelle LeBlanc, Maddy Stumpos, Robert Harrison** and faculty advisor **Renee Nichols**. The school will be adding a second drive in the spring.



Nick Lemmer

Duncan Aviation. The **Battle Creek** branch of this national company is on-board for a 56-day blood drive cycle. In the last year, Duncan collected 228 productive donations through four drives. Coordinators leveraged the company's newsletter to provide educational pieces on the need for blood as well as occasional fast facts about blood and blood donation.

Galesburg-Augusta High School. Students at this southwestern Michigan school maxed out their sign-up sheets and pulled off a nearly perfect drive earlier this fall. The **National Honor Society** generated interest by setting up tables at football games and making classroom rounds. They also worked with advisors to educate donors on how they could prepare for their donation by eating iron-rich foods. Among those involved were NHS President **Jackie Bowe**, NHS Advisor **Ardis Cook**, and Director of Food Services **Denise Armstrong**.

Excelda Manufacturing. This full-service, specialty chemical manufacturing and distributing company applied its *Yes we do, yes we can* philosophy to their first-ever blood drive in November. The Red Cross parked its blood bus outside, and staff got on board to donate and enjoy home-



Vince Olenik

baked goodies in the canteen. "We know it's more important than ever to help neighbors in need," says **Gerri Barr**, VP of human resources and communication. The Brighton-based company plans to host another drive in August.

March is Red Cross Month

Whether you have a blood drive in March or not, think about celebrating Red Cross Month. Every year, the 31 days in March provide the opportunity to recognize the enduring spirit of the American Red Cross, and the extended family of volunteers, donors, partners and employees who make our mission possible.



All year long, the Red Cross is grateful for the tireless work of the volunteers who schedule and work at blood drives, and for the countless blood donors who help save lives every time they give. Saying thank you sometimes doesn't seem like enough. But each March, we have the chance to honor and thank members of our Red Cross family, and to remind people that the Red Cross is where Americans can make a difference.

Here are some ways to honor those who help you help save lives:

- Send your volunteers a thank you note or letter. A simple note like - *March is Red Cross Month. Thank you for everything you do to make our drive a success.* - can go a long way.
- Send a card or e-mail message to donors reminding them that March is Red Cross Month. Thank them for being heroes by donating blood.
- Remind blood donors of your next blood drive. Ask them to save the date, or to make an appointment to give in honor of Red Cross Month.



American Red Cross

Great Lakes Blood Services Region

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Drivetime Talk

Newsletter for you...

Our Blood Drive Sponsors and Coordinators

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**CALL 1-800-GIVE-LIFE
(1-800-448-3543)**

**TO MAKE YOUR
APPOINTMENT TO
DONATE!**

Why we sponsor blood drives

In Michigan, the American Red Cross needs to collect about 420,000 donations this year for patients in about 113 Michigan hospitals. And we're doing it with the help of you: our blood drive sponsors and volunteers across the state. We've asked you to tell us why you sponsor blood drives. Here's what one of you said . . .

"My mother, **Kathleen Lee**, battled leukemia for more than 4 years and never let it hold her down. About a year ago this month, Mom became transfusion dependent. She received in excess of 109 pints of blood to keep her going up to her passing. Yes, she was a sick lady. But you never heard her complain. Without the blood that was given to her, she wouldn't have had that extra 10 months of life, nor would my family have had that time to spend with her.

Mom prepared herself for the outcome. But she also had things she wanted to get done. One of the last things on her list was to attend her **granddaughter's Homecoming**. She not only attended that night (the Friday before she passed), she saw **Taylor** get crowned Homecoming Queen.

Whenever I heard of a blood drive, I always thought about people who had been in an accident or having major surgery as needing the blood. But I've learned there are many more people out there who need blood to extend life, or as part of a treatment for an illness they have. I cannot donate blood myself but have pledged, in honor of my mother, to volunteer at any Red Cross function that needs help. From now on, I will not be afraid to step up.



Kathleen and Taylor Lee

So I ask you, if you can donate blood, please do. If you can't donate, consider volunteering to help out those who can. **Russ Lee, Ionia.**

Would you like to tell us why you coordinate blood drives? We'll print all or part of what you say . . . as space permits. Call or e-mail Ann Kammerer at **517-318-7360** or **kammerera@usa.redcross.org**