

LIFE Lines



American Red Cross

News For Donors In The Great Lakes Blood Services Region

Winter 2009

Build a new holiday tradition

Michigan residents are no strangers to economic woe. Now that winter is here, many people will be struggling to create a festive spirit for the holidays. The **American Red Cross** will also be struggling to maintain a sufficient blood supply. The need for blood remains constant, but our ability to collect blood is affected by **holiday weekends and winter weather**. Some businesses and organizations, too, are reluctant to hold blood drives during the holidays. Many of Michigan's automotive plants and suppliers—once our long-time support-

ers—are finding themselves unable to host blood drives because of shut-downs or belt tightening. And when you consider we lose about one-fifth of our donor pool when high schools and colleges go on break, you can see that times are tough all around.

Despite the obstacles, one thing hasn't changed: **blood donors' generosity**. And, what a perfect gift-giving opportunity this season is. You can help save up to three lives by donating blood as a way to give thanks, to honor family and friends,

or to ring in the new year. You can build a new tradition that simply requires your time and not your wallet. Please **make and keep your appointment**

to give this holiday season. Call us today at **1-800-GIVE LIFE**.



A donor's story: Doreen

Sometimes holidays bring the expected and the unexpected. In the mid-1980s, **Doreen Beason** was expecting her oldest son to be born on Thanksgiving weekend. But immediately after her son was born, Doreen experienced the unexpected: she began hemorrhaging and losing blood.

Because the blood supply was low, doctors had to wait until the last possible moment to transfuse. Doreen received **four units of type o negative**, but only after she had lost massive amounts of blood. She continued to bleed and had no choice but to leave the hospital anemic because blood was not available.

"I had always assumed that someone else would take care of the problem," says Doreen, who had never donated blood before her son was born.

Doreen learned from experience, and realized she could help ensure that blood was there for others. As soon as she was eligible, she rolled up her sleeve to give, and began sharing her story about how blood helped save her life.

Years later, Doreen reconfirmed her commitment when **her mother** became terminally ill and needed blood. Realizing that blood donors had been there for her and her family, Doreen made another life-changing decision: she accepted a job with the **American Red Cross**.



Doreen Beason

Doreen has worked in **donor recruitment** for more than a decade. She likes it, she says, because she's on the front lines of educating people about the need for blood, and getting people to donate. She has coordinated drives at her church and is the forerunner of **Pint Size Heroes**—a community-service program in which elementary-age children recruit friends and family to give blood at their schools.

"Pint Size Heroes really pulled my heartstrings," says Doreen. "I knew I needed to

be educating kids. If I can educate them while they are young, they will be ready to donate when they get to high school because they will understand the need."

The American Red Cross hosts pint-size hero drives throughout the state to help build the next generation of blood donors. Blood drives at high schools and colleges also provide opportunity for young donors to give.

While close to 20 percent of blood collected through the Red Cross comes from high school and college students, baby boomers and the WWII generation make up more than half of our donors. With time, some of those older donors may need blood for their own medical care.

You can help. Bring along a son, daughter or family friend when you give. And if you're a student, get involved with blood donation activities with your school. You can be part of the solution, and help change a life.

The need is constant. The gratification is instant. Give blood.™

Updates on giving

Young donors. Blood donors 19 and under started receiving some extra TLC this fall when the American Red Cross introduced new height and weight requirements for whole blood donations.

The Red Cross initiated these **new safety measures** based on research indicating that young donors are more likely than older donors to experience a reaction after giving whole blood. Most reactions, Red Cross officials say, are minor, and include symptoms such as dizziness or lightheadedness. Although sometimes, fainting or more serious injuries can occur.

Young donors are more likely to have a reaction if they have a low blood volume. A person's blood volume depends on their sex, height and weight. The new Red Cross policy attempts to ensure that eligible donors will only lose a relatively small amount of their total blood volume.

Even if students donated successfully in the past, they will no longer be allowed to give if they do not meet the new criteria for height and weight. While the precaution may disappoint some donors, the measures are necessary to improve overall safety for young donors. The Red Cross recommends that individuals who cannot donate blood can help in other ways like helping to organize a blood drive. Be sure to call or visit our web site if you need more specifics on the new criteria.



Appointment priority. Some of you have told us you'd like to see us move to an **appointment-based system**. And we're doing that. Gradually. All with the idea of decreasing the overall amount of time it may take to help save a life by rolling up your sleeve.

If you chose to set an appointment, it simply means that you'll be given **first priority**, regardless of what the wait appears to be. If you have an appointment, our goal is to keep it. Appointment priority will be honored 10 minutes before and 10 minutes after your scheduled time.

Want to learn more about donating blood, as well as about other services and programs through the American Red Cross? Visit our new website at redcrossblood.org.

Why we give: Lori's story

Although it was homecoming weekend at her children's school, **Lori Waas** was far from going home. Just minutes after 5 p.m., she was being pried from her car with multiple fractures, barely able to breathe. On her way to the emergency room, she learned she'd been hit head-on by a pickup truck. The driver was drunk, a 12-pack found on the front seat of the cab. Unlike Lori, he didn't survive.

"The statistics were turned upside down," says Lori of the accident 12 years ago that nearly took her life. "Thank goodness my kids weren't with me, and I was alone in the van."

Lori's children, then second through 11th grade, were playing soccer or involved in high school homecoming. And in a time before cell phones, hospital medics and personnel could only locate her 16-year-old daughter before Lori was admitted to the hospital.

Lori underwent immediate surgery to attend to internal bleeding, a crushed pelvis, and broken feet and ankles. Post surgery, she received a heart catheter and **three units of blood**. She was in the hospital for eight days, then in a wheel-

chair for three months. It was an experience, she says, that changed her life.

"My whole family gained a new appreciation for what's important," says Lori. "It's about being together, about being a family, about having each other in our lives."



Lori and her family: Son-in-law Nate, Rachael, Lori, Joel, Elizabeth, Zachary and Michael

Today, Lori is in her 10th year of teaching computer-based learning to about 180 high students at **Kensington Woods High School** in southeast Michigan. Her five children are grown and away at college or in careers. They make it a point to get together at least twice a year.

"It made us stronger as a family," says Lori. "We also were very humbled by all the support we got from neighbors and the community. Everyone was so helpful."

As a way of giving back, Lori shares her experience twice a year with students in her school's health class. She brings in pictures of her car, and of her in a wheelchair, and talks about the consequences of drinking and driving.

This fall, Lori drew on her inner strength to survive another life-changing experience: **breast cancer**. Recently, Lori was declared **cancer-free** after finishing several rounds of chemotherapy and radiation. Her fight with cancer, she says, has made her even more committed to the school's new venture into hosting blood drives through the **American Red Cross**.

"I will absolutely be donating again," says Lori, who pitched in and helped organize despite being deferred from donating. "I really appreciate how valuable blood is. After all, it saved my life."

Why we give...

We asked you to tell us why you roll up your sleeves to help save lives. Here's what you said...

"I started giving blood during World War II, just like I'm sure a lot of people did. I had just graduated from high school. When my husband retired years later, we moved to Arizona for a while. We had to wait in line to give because so many people there were veterans." **Rebecca Munchausen, Mason.**

"When I was 10 years old back in the 1960s, my dad, **Richard Wimmer**, got a phone call early one evening. A little boy had just gone through a big glass window and needed blood. My dad immediately left for the hospital to give blood, which helped save the boy's life. I never forgot that night. Since my dad is type O negative, he occasionally got other calls like that over the years, and was a donor up until his 70s. He's now 90.

In the early 1970s, my mom received blood, and in the 1990s, my father-in-law needed transfusions. I made my first donation then and learned I had type O negative just like my dad. Since then, I have gone to every blood drive in my area to donate. Over the years, I've given a number of *quad bags* which I'm told go to four different babies in need. I just made my 82nd donation this summer. I always tell people that of all the things I do in life, the thing I am most proud of is being a regular Red Cross blood donor." **Ellen Wimmer, East Jordan.**



Ellen and Richard Wimmer

"Up until the time I was a college student, I had always made excuses about why I wouldn't give. When my brother left for Vietnam, my family and I took him to the airport. Seeing him take off on that flight made me make up my mind to finally start giving blood. Since then, it's become a habit for me. I go every eight weeks." **Ron Walters, Grand Ledge.**

"I became aware of blood donation when my mother needed blood. I was about 11. My dad asked me to call all our relatives and to ask them to give to help my mom. I made up my mind that when I was eligible to donate, I would. I give as often as I can and just reached my 11-gallon mark." **Stuart Trager, Detroit.**

"Back in 1971, I had two children who were in the hospital and needed back surgery because of scoliosis. The doctor told me they need seven pints of blood between the two of them, and then asked if I could come up with any friends, relatives or acquaintances who could donate. I told them I knew of one. That was me. I've been giving ever since and recently reached my 19th gallon." **Julius Koepke, Mt. Morris.**

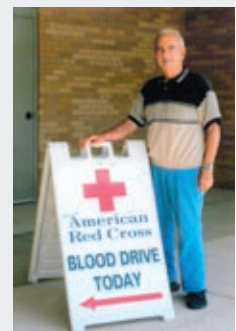
"I first gave when I was 17 when my grandfather needed blood. I've kept on giving because I enjoy it and enjoy helping people, and recently reached my 20-gallon mark. I'm just one of many and feel happy I can give." **Dave Kendall, Muskegon.**

"Nothing will make you feel better about yourself than helping others and giving back to your community. I do this by donating blood. It makes me feel good knowing that my blood donation can help save lives or may help improve the quality of life for cancer patients, people with blood disorders, or accident victims." **Ahmad Yahya, Detroit.**

The way we give...

A random sampling of blood donors who have reached milestones in the Great Lakes Region...

- **Kathleen P. Albon**, Sault Ste. Marie. 22 gal.
- **Henry George**, St. Johns. 24 gal.
- **Francis J. Schafer**, Williamston. 29 gal.
- **Marieanna Bair**, Brighton. 22 gal.
- **Charles Hillman**, Almont. 22 gal.
- **Susan Wedda**, Goodrich. 20 gal.
- **Stanley Brandsen**, Holland. 17 gal.
- **Neil Hughes**, Delton. 20 gal.
- **Marco J. Wolschon**, Sheridan. 17 gal.
- **Lynn Buning**, Falmouth. 17 gal.
- **Jeffrey D. Johnson**, Coopersville. 17 gal.
- **William Burnham**, Rose City. 29 gal.
- **Sylvia Kenyak**, Caseville. 25 gal.
- **And congratulations to Richard Grovom** of Grand Blanc. Despite knee surgery and seven months of rehab this year, Richard recently reached his 40th gallon—or 320 pints. That's giving!
- **Wayne Clock**, Muskegon. 29 gal.
- **Frederick Kinsey**, Vestaburg. 15 gal.
- **Douglas Collins**, Mount Pleasant. 17 gal.
- **Lawrence P. Kunze**, Alpena. 16 gal.
- **Grant Colthorp**, St. Louis. 19 gal.
- **Melvin Morford**, Elwell. 18 gal.
- **Gerald Alan Desmond**, Mount Morris. 24 gal.
- **Raymond J. Nicolai**, Twin Lake. 20 gal.
- **LaVerne DeVries**, Zeeland. 25 gal.
- **Janet Pennington**, Lake City. 16 gal.
- **Grady Dyson**, Genesee. 20 gal.
- **Donald Raymond**, Lennon. 33 gal.
- **Jerry Elliott**, Grand Blanc. 21 gal.
- **David Reglin**, Lansing. 26 gal.
- **Alan Etson**, Grayling. 32 gal.
- **Chuck Richards**, Gaylord. 20 gal.
- **John H. Fikse**, Central Lake. 25 gal.
- **Doug Prell**, West Olive. 18 gal.



Know someone who should be included? Call Ann at 1-800-968-4283, ext. 360.



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Great Lakes Blood Services Region

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Donating for a lifetime

I was brought up to help whenever and wherever I could. I have always perceived the American Red Cross as an organization that helps. Whether it's a disaster that affects a family or a disaster



that affects several communities the Red Cross is there. I understand the Red Cross assists anyone in need and whenever they can through a network of volunteers and professionals, and through generous donations of blood, materials and money.

It was natural for me to be drawn to the Red Cross and their philosophy. So in college, I became a blood donor. I also started donating platelets in the early 1980s, and give them through the Red Cross 24 times a year.

Here's my pitch: Please consider increasing the number of times you donate blood each year. During the holidays, when you receive requests for donations from other charities, remember that a donation of blood or platelets won't cost you a dime, but will mean a lifetime for someone desperately in need. **Michael O'Keefe, Eagle.**

Michael's goal is to reach 55-gallons by his 55th birthday. His birthday is in late December. So far, he's at 54 and 3/4 gallons! The Red Cross often counts both whole blood and platelet donations toward gallon pins.

News from cyber space

At the American Red Cross, we're working hard to simplify our presence on the web. Recently, we launched a new site devoted to our Biomedical Services, one that provides you fresh, up-to-date information on blood donation programs and services in your community, your state

and across the nation. Our intent, now as always, is to make our websites easy to find and easy to navigate. Most important, we want to bring you the content you've come to need and expect from your American Red Cross.

Be sure to check us out **at redcross-blood.org**. And don't forget, too, to check us out Facebook by searching for American Red Cross Blood donors at **facebook.com**