



Official Publication of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and M



TheCatholicSpirit.com

Tuesday, January 29, 2008

For many, desire to give gift of life is in their blood

By Ellen Capecchi
For The Catholic Spirit

Tuesday, January 29, 2008



Pam David undergoes apheresis, a process in which platelets are donated for cancer treatments and bone marrow transplants. Photo courtesy of the American Red Cross

Everyone agrees that donating blood saves lives.

But not everyone shares the same motivation for giving. Some are inspired to help others. Others find donating to be a prayerful experience. Still others view it as an opportunity for fellowship and outreach.

Larry Popp wants it to be one of the things he is remembered for after he dies.

Popp, 69, asked his sons to promise to display his blood donor pins in his coffin.

"I'll be honest. School was hard for me," said Popp, a member of St. John Neumann in Eagan. "I barely graduated high school, and I never had what you'd call a good job. But giving blood is the one way I can do help save lives."

Want to blood?

• To make to donate, call (800)

• For more to make a online, go www.givel

Popp crafted a wooden plaque to display the 11 pins he has received from the American Red Cross. Each pin represents a single pint of blood, a single pint of which can help save up to three lives, according to the Red Cross.

"When people see this plaque in my coffin they'll say, 'Good,' and they'll know that I've touched 264 lives," Popp says. "They keep calling and I'm still here, I'll keep giving."

A ready supply of blood components is needed to treat serious injuries, for organ transplants and for cancer treatments. The American Red Cross notes that an average of 38,000 units (one unit equals approximately one pint) of red blood cells are needed on a daily basis.

Prayer experience

Pam David is among the 30 percent of donors who continue to give blood after their first donation.

Just after David's 18th birthday, a parishioner invited her to donate blood with him to honor soldiers serving in Vietnam.

David, a member of St. Patrick in Inver Grove Heights, has now turned giving blood into an exercise in prayer.

"I pray for the person who will receive my blood. I pray it will give them strength," she said. "When I volunteer at our center, I pray for those coming in to donate."

David regularly gives platelets through a process called "apheresis," a painless procedure lasting one to two hours that allows him to give up to 10 times more platelets than a whole blood donation. Platelets are used in cancer treatments and bone marrow transplants.

Community outreach

Anna-Marie Bistodeau left her job in the printing industry to coordinate apheresis donations for the American Red Cross. She made the move because she wanted a career that was more people-oriented.

"I consider soliciting blood to be more of an outreach," said Bistodeau, a member of St. Augustine in South St. Paul.

"I pray for the telerecruiters who call and schedule donors, and I pray for those giving platelets," Bistodeau said. "I pray for the specialist on the floor, and I pray for those cancer and leukemia patients awaiting those platelets."

Fellowship

For a time, Myrt Milner, a member of St. John Vianney in South St. Paul, gave blood religiously.

"Whenever they called and said it was time for me to give again, my husband drove me right down to the center," she said. "A regular donor can give blood every eight weeks."

Milner is no longer able to give blood, but she enjoys serving refreshments to donors. In years past, she served hot coffee and donuts.

"I'm the kind of person who likes to volunteer," Milner said. "You meet people who become a part of your life. It's very rewarding."

Pass it forward

Carol Murphy considers donating blood her way to pass on the gift of life. Murphy and several of her family members have donated blood.

"This fostered my commitment to be involved," she said. "We are all God's children and need to care for each other."

Murphy, a member of St. Matthew in St. Paul, served many years as co-coordinator for Rosary Society-sponsored volunteer nurses completed health histories and paperwork before Red Cross staff arrived.

Murphy heard tales of previously reluctant or needle-shy parishioners experiencing a change of heart after a loved one donated blood.

"As a nurse and working in oncology, I witnessed the positive effects the blood donation has - both for the one receiving the blood and for their family members as well," she said.

Judy DeNardo, a retired nurse and also a member of St. Matthew's, said that "giving blood is our response to the gift of life."

She said donating blood on a holy day or during Lent can make the experience even more meaningful.

Related Links

Content © 2008 The Catholic Spirit
Software © 1998-2008 **1up! Software**, All Rights Reserved