

KSTP.com - 5 EYEWITNESS NEWS

Posted at: 03/18/2008 12:07:38 PM

Updated at: 03/19/2008 09:51:30 AM

By: Nicole Muehlhausen, Web Producer

Minn. blood donor age dropped



Starting in July, Minnesota blood drives will be open to more teenagers.

Governor Tim Pawlenty has signed into law a bill that lowers the legal age for blood donors from 17 years old to 16 years old.

The younger donors would be allowed to donate blood with a parent's permission, but they won't be able to donate for money.

"Our donor base is shrinking, it's getting older, and we're trying to find ways to get young people involved. That's what Joe Gibson's done today and it's just incredible," said Dr. David Mair.

A Blooming Prairie High School sophomore, Gibson, came up with the law change after being turned away from a school blood drive.

"I walked up to the table and asked them if I could donate. They said I was two years too young. I was 15 at the time and it just didn't make sense to me," he explained.

Gibson looked on as Pawlenty signed the bill at the capitol on Tuesday.

"I think the only moral out of all of this, is that youth can make a difference. It's something that I truly believe in," Gibson said.

Pawlenty believes Gibson's impact could be far reaching.

"This is a way for young people to think about giving back, both figuratively and literally. To think about the value of the giving of themselves," he said.

He says he "can't wait" to take advantage of the law and says he plans to bring a bunch of his friends to donate blood as soon as it takes effect.