

## Teen Initiator of 16-Year-Old Blood Donor Legislation Hosts American Red Cross Blood Drive July 3

*Blood drive marks milestone for 16-year-old Blooming Prairie native Joe Gibson who set out to help save lives and affect public policy*

**BLOOMING PRAIRIE, Minn.** (June 30, 2008) – Just a few months ago 16-year-old Joe Gibson stood with Governor Tim Pawlenty in front of the Capitol Press Corp announcing that a bill he initiated authorizing 16-year-olds as eligible voluntary blood donors with parental consent would become law effective July 1, 2008. On July 3, 2008, Joe Gibson will see his efforts in action as he hosts his first blood drive to recognize and celebrate 16-year-old donor eligibility, and gets the opportunity to donate blood himself.

**WHAT:** Joe Gibson – American Red Cross blood drive

**WHEN:** Thursday, July 3, 2008  
10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (prime media opportunity 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.)

**WHERE:** Servicemen's Club, 210 NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Blooming Prairie, Minn.

**WHO:** Joe Gibson, Representative Patti Fritz, Senator Kathy Sheran, Red Cross CEO Rick Panning, Red Cross Medical Director David Mair M.D., Red Cross Board Member and Legislative Committee Chair Steve Sviggum

**MEDIA:** Nick Gehrig, 651-291-3286 or Jill Applegate, 651-291-3290

Gibson worked with Representative Patti Fritz and Senator Kathy Sheran to introduce and pass the 16-year-old donor bill in the Minnesota House of Representatives and Minnesota Senate. On March 18, 2008, Governor Tim Pawlenty signed the bill into law.

“Youth really can have a positive impact on public policy,” said Gibson who will be a junior at Blooming Prairie High School next school year, but is already entertaining the idea of law school. “The legislative process has been an amazing experience and I’m happy that we were able to pass a bill allowing 16-year-olds like me to help patients by donating blood.”

Minnesota is the 23<sup>rd</sup> state to pass legislation or adopt variances recognizing 16-year-olds as eligible voluntary blood donors with parental/guardian consent (two states also allow donations by 16-year-olds without parental consent). Wisconsin passed similar legislation, which took effect March 14, resulting in approximately 1,300 donations to the Red Cross to-date from 16-year-old blood donors. Approximately 20 percent of blood donations made to the Red Cross comes from high school and college blood drives.

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With only 38 percent of the United States population eligible to give blood, and just a fraction of those actually donating, Minnesota's three blood collection organizations of voluntary blood donations – the American Red Cross, Mayo Clinic and Memorial Blood Centers – supported the legislation spurred by Gibson.

“This legislation can help increase the number of eligible donors, foster a commitment to blood donation and enhance our ability to meet the growing demand for blood,” said Rick Panning, CEO of the American Red Cross North Central Blood Services Region. “Many of today's committed blood donors began donating while in high school.”

The Red Cross encourages all blood donors, especially first-time donors, to take a few easy steps to prepare for a good donation experience: Get a good night's sleep, eat a good meal and drink extra water or other non-caffeinated fluids.

All 16-year-olds wanting to donate must have a Red Cross parental/guardian consent form signed July 1, 2008 or after and must bring the signed Red Cross parental consent form with them to the blood drive.

### **How to Donate Blood**

Simply call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE (1-800-448-3543) or visit [givebloodgivelife.org](http://givebloodgivelife.org) to make an appointment or for more information. All blood types are needed to ensure a reliable supply for patients. A blood donor card or driver's license, or two other forms of identification are required at check-in. Donors must be at least 17-years-old, 16-years-old with a signed Red Cross parent/guardian consent form, and must weigh at least 110 pounds.

### **About the American Red Cross**

The St. Paul-based North Central Blood Services Region of the American Red Cross is the largest blood supplier in Minnesota, serving 111 hospitals in the Twin Cities, greater Minnesota, western Wisconsin and eastern South Dakota. Governed by volunteers and supported by giving individuals and communities, the American Red Cross is the single largest supplier of blood products to hospitals throughout the United States. While local hospital needs are always met first, the Red Cross also helps ensure no patient goes without blood no matter where or when they need it. In addition to providing nearly half of the nation's blood supply, the Red Cross provides relief to victims of disaster, trains millions in lifesaving skills, serves as a communication link between U.S. military members and their families, and assists victims of international disasters or conflicts.

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