News Release

American Red Cross

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American Red Cross Aims to Curb Potential Summer Blood Donation Shortfall

Meet the Need campaign kicks-off

ST. PAUL, Minn. (May 27, 2008) – While gasoline prices and the slumping economy may be on the minds of many this summer, the American Red Cross Blood Services has cause for an even greater concern – patients lives. Every summer, Red Cross officials say blood and platelet donations lag as many donors vacation or are otherwise occupied with summer activities and neglect to donate.

The sometimes dire situation can be exacerbated by an approximate 50 percent drop in blood donations from high school- and college-aged donors because school is not in session and campus blood drives don't occur. Up to 20 percent of the Red Cross' blood donations come from high schools, colleges and universities during the regular school year.

- Every 2 seconds a patient in the U.S. needs blood
- 38,000 red cell blood units are needed every day
- The average blood donor gives less than two times annually

What's more, the eligible blood donor pool in the United States was recently confirmed to be nearly half as large as previously thought – just 38 percent of the U.S. population – once taking into account common deferral criteria in addition to age. And only a fraction of those eligible – about 8 percent – actually donate blood.

"Demand for blood doesn't necessarily increase during the summer, but blood donations definitely decrease," says Rick Panning, CEO of the North Central Blood Services Region. "It's not a usage issue we have, it's a donation issue. But the good news is that by working with generous blood donors and volunteer blood drive coordinators in our communities we can maintain stable blood supplies, curb blood shortages and 'meet the need' of every patient this summer."

Meet the Need – Give Blood

To ensure stable blood supplies for area hospitals and patients, the American Red Cross developed a summer blood donation campaign focused on raising awareness of the challenging summer months for blood donation. The Red Cross hopes to engage new and current blood donors through frequent communication and special promotions that encourage them to give blood and *Meet the Need* for blood this summer.

"The need for blood doesn't take a summer vacation," added Panning. "The need is constant and the blood supply must be replenished regularly."

The Red Cross began communicating with blood donors about summer challenges earlier this month and has planned regular updates to donors about the state of the blood supply and when they're eligible to donate.

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Engaging Youth through Music Saves Lives
To engage youth blood donors during the summer months, the Red Cross is partnering with another non-profit called Music Saves Lives. The two organizations will offer presenting blood donors at participating blood drives a free backstage pass to the popular Vans Warped Tour music festival.

"Music fans won't have to wait in line for a chance at a back-stage pass if they're willing to help 'meet the need' and give blood with the American Red Cross," said Panning. The Vans Warped Tour will take center stage at Canterbury Park in Shakopee, Minn. on August 3, 2008. More information and a list of participating Music Saves Lives blood drives can be found online at givebloodgivelife.org.

Red Cross Racing
Perhaps the most exciting component of the Red Cross summer blood donation campaign is the opportunity for racing fans. The American Red Cross teamed up with 3M and Roush Fenway Racing to launch *Red Cross Racing*, a campaign to raise awareness of the need to give blood among NASCAR fans and features Greg Biffle, driver of the No. 16 Roush Ford.

"I'm proud to be an American Red Cross blood donor," said Biffle. "I give blood because it's easy to do and helps support our community. I hope NASCAR fans across the country will join me this racing season in helping to save lives, one drive at a time."

Race fans can visit redcrossracing.com to sign up for a new donor rewards program and earn points to be exchanged for Red Cross Racing gear including caps, t-shirts, jackets and limited edition die-cast cars. Registrants will also be eligible to win an all-expense-paid trip for two to the Checker Auto Parts 500 at Phoenix International Speedway on November 9, 2008. The prize package includes airfare, hotel and two race tickets.

"The number one reason people don't give blood is because no one asked them," said Panning. "Consider yourself asked! The stability of the blood supply is in the hands of volunteer blood donors. Every blood donation counts."

How to Donate Blood
To learn more about the Red Cross' Meet the Need campaign and to donate blood and platelets visit givebloodgivelife.org call **1-800-GIVE-LIFE** (1-800-448-3543). 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 parent/guardian consent form in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Wisconsin, and Minnesota beginning July 1, 2008, and must weigh at least 110 pounds.

About the American Red Cross
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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