

Red Cross Joins with World to Celebrate Blood Donors

June 14 is the fifth worldwide celebration of World Blood Donor Day.

PEORIA, Ill. (June 9, 2009) – The French say, “Mon Sang pour D’autres,” or “My Blood for Others.” The sentiments of that message will resonate worldwide on June 14, 2009 as the fifth annual World Blood Donor Day is observed and celebrated.

World Blood Donor Day will honor the world’s blood donors for the life-saving contributions they make to their communities and encourage others to become regular blood donors.

“Every second, someone in the world needs a blood transfusion to live. We all share the need for a healthy, stable blood supply,” said Shelly Heiden, CEO of the Heart of America Blood Services Region of the American Red Cross. “The very gesture of holding out one’s arm to give blood is a strong, universal symbol of solidarity, giving and understanding.”

A recent survey showed that out of 178 countries, only 39 have 100 percent voluntary, unpaid blood donations. That same survey showed that, on average, only one of every 1,000 people actually donates blood. It is an on-going challenge to develop a worldwide strategy that results in more people becoming blood donors, particularly in developing countries.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), some 82% of the world's population does not have the certainty that blood will be available for them when they need it.

“In the United States, one in 10 hospital patients needs blood,” said Heiden. “Only about 38 percent of the U.S. population is eligible to donate, and just a fraction of those eligible actually donate.”

Sponsoring organizations for World Blood Donor Day are the International Society of Blood Transfusions, the International Federation of Blood Donors Organizations, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the World Health Organization. The host country for the 2009 World Blood Donor Day is Australia.

The American Red Cross encourages donors and potential donors to make giving blood a regular part of their lives. One unit of blood can help save up to three lives.

How to Donate Blood

Simply call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE (1-800-448-3543) or visit 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. Eligible donors must be at least 17 years old, or 16 years old with a signed Red Cross parental/guardian consent form where state permits, must weigh at least 110 pounds and be in general good health.

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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