

## Give another character Give blood.

American  
Red Cross

**Happy birthday:** When Willie Edwards (top photo) told Kelly Butrico his birthday wish little did he know people like Red Cross nurse Adrienne Jones (photo at right) and donor Pam Rose would make it a reality.



STAFF PHOTO BY ART EMANUELE

## Helping others

### Man's birthday wish comes true

BY SUE MADON  
STAFF WRITER

Willie Edwards turned 80 on May 10. He was served his favorite dinner and heard a chorus of two of "Happy Birthday to You" before digging into the cake and ice cream.

And of course, there were presents — a stuffed animal for Edwards and the gift of life for more than 100 people. You see, Edwards, terminally ill with prostate cancer, had his birthday wish — to do something to help people — come true.

"Well, yeah, it was a surprise," said Edwards, a hospice patient at the Dorvin Nursing Center near Middlebelt, just south of Eight Mile in Livonia. "I didn't believe it would happen."

The what was an American Red Cross blood drive, held in Edwards' honor at Dorvin on his birthday. Organized by the center's activities director Kelly Butrico, it was the result of a cooperative effort involving the center, the Red Cross and Community Hospice Services, based in Westland and Plymouth.

It was during a conversation with her that Edwards expressed his wish to help people. After their talk, she started working the telephone.

"He's won a lot of hearts here because he's very sweet," said

Butrico. "We wanted to try and help people in the same situation as Willie and decided on the blood drive so people could also be tested to be bone marrow donors."

"Willie thought it was too late to do something, but did say that 'Everyone can do something, even if they're like me and only have two hands to use.'"

Edwards was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1990. He became a patient of the Community Hospice Services in March and without family — his wife died several years ago — was moved to the nursing center that same month because of his declining health.

"What touched me was that here is a man dying of cancer and his birthday wish is to help others," said Vicki Martin of Community Hospice Services. "Here is someone saying, 'Don't focus on me, focus on someone else.' It personifies what hospice is all about."

Balloons still hung from the door of Edwards' room the day after his birthday and a Red Cross banner graced the wall opposite his bed. The single day wish was lost in the myriad of birthday wishes written by the people who donated blood.

"I had a lot of girls in here," said Edwards, referring to the

center's administrative staff that provided the musical birthday salute.

And Edwards also heard from a former Detroit neighbor who called after seeing a snippet about the celebration on television. The neighbor had been trying to find out what had happened to Edwards, but was stymied because he wasn't a relative, Butrico said.

In all, 48 people turned out for the blood drive and the Red Cross collected 37 pints of blood. According to the Red Cross, each pint of blood will help three people, making Edwards' wish a gift to 111 other people.

It also helped the residents of the nursing center, who took an active part in the blood drive. They showed visitors where to go, brought cups to the Red Cross canteen, and sold notecards, sweatshirts and hats for the Michigan Cancer Foundation.

Some residents even rolled up their sleeves and donated blood.

"It was very good to have a blood drive here," Butrico said. "The residents, who feel unproductive and isolated from the community, found they could be involved and a productive part of the community."

Described as a "gentle spirited man who just recently accepted the fact he is dying," the former deputy sheriff has just one friend,

William Bradshaw, who was at his side for the celebration.

He also brought him a very special gift — framed photographs of Edwards' wife as a young woman and when she was older and one of Edwards as a young man.

"Mr. Bradshaw said Willie hasn't had a day as good as his birthday in a long time as to being alert, awake and knowing what was going on," Butrico said. "He's on morphine for the pain and usually sleeps 70 percent of the time, but he was up until 8 p.m."

Butrico credits the Red Cross in making Edwards' wish come true — "We couldn't have done it without them" — and would like to make the blood drive an annual event. In fact, she is looking into forming the Dorvin Dream Team that would focus on making birthday wishes come true. His first dreamer is a resident who has always wanted to go fishing.

"I think what hospice believes and we believe, too, is that people can live every day of their lives," Butrico said. "That's why we have activities everyday. We try to show the residents they are living and can do things like celebrate birthdays like living people do."

"If three organizations and a dying man can do something like this, just think what healthy people can do."

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## Zoo from page 20A

"Animal Speak" (ages 6-9) will teach children to recognize that rattling tails and erect quills have distinct communication messages in the animal world. The single-day adventure will be 9:30 a.m. to noon June 27, July 19 and Aug. 7. During "Whose Habitat?" (ages 6-9), children will explore the many interesting homes found in the animal world — whether they are underground or up a tree. Some amazing animal architects will be examined as part of the single-day adventure 9:30 a.m. to noon June 25, July 24 and Aug. 9.

As "Junior Zoologist" (ages 6-9), children will have to think like

scientists to experience the many different facets of animal life and behavior. The single-day adventure will be 9:30 a.m. to noon July 5, July 26 and Aug. 16.

"Who in the Zoo?" (ages 6-12) will teach children about the animals' special grocery shoppers, doctors and dentists who help keep the zoo running smoothly. The single-day adventure will be 9:30 a.m. to noon July 11.

"Zoo Snoozers..." (ages 6-10) will give children the experience of sleeping in an old-fashioned log cabin and hiking through the zoo at night. The overnight adventure will be 7 p.m. to 9 a.m. June 20.

30, July 6-7, July 13-14, July 20-21, July 27-28, Aug. 3-4 and Aug. 10-11. The cost will be \$35 for DZS members, \$40 for non-members.

Phone registration can be completed between 9:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., beginning Saturday, May 13. Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover are accepted forms of payment. Call the Detroit Zoological Society at (810) 641-5717 for registration or a program brochure.

DZS family memberships begin at \$50 and individual memberships cost \$35. Benefits include unlimited free admission to the Detroit Zoo, Belle Isle Zoo and

Aquarium for one full year, free admission to 100 zoos nationwide, free parking, invitations to members-only events and special discounts.

Underwritten by the DZS, the Summer Safari Series also is supported by the Junior League of Detroit.

The Detroit Zoo, open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily year-round, is at 10 Mile Road and Woodward Avenue in Royal Oak. Regular admission is \$6 for adults, \$4 for senior citizens, \$3 for children 2-12 years of age and free for children under 2. For more information call (810) 398-0903.