Blood from page A1

Daily donations desired

Risko said low supply isn't the only worry. She emphasized that people must donate blood on a daily basis to ensure sufficient levels of blood platelets, which cancer patients rely on.

"One big problem is that platelets ... only (have) a shelf life of four to five days," Risko said.

At one point in early January, the Red Cross needed 500 units of blood platelets but only had 25 in stock.

Platelet levels drop during chemotherapy, necessitating blood transfusions, said Mary Jane Happy of The Phoebe Foundation, an area organization named in the memory of a 3-year-old girl who died from leukemia in 1996.

According to Risko, 10 people must donate pints to make enough platelets for one blood transfusion. Platelets are the smallest components of the life-sustaining liquid. They are disk-like structures that help stop bleeding.

When someone donates blood, it is separated into three parts: platelets, red blood cells and plasma. Red blood cells can last for 42 days, and plasma also has an extended shelf life.

The Phoebe Foundation, a Beverly Hills-based nonprofit organization, last month teamed up with the Red Cross for an annual bone marrow and blood drive. Happy said it also tries to help families of children who are seriously ill.

"These families acutely know what it's like" to face blood bank shortages at times their children need it most, Happy said.

She said more than 4,000 children in southeastern Michigan use various blood products each month for treatment of illness or injury.

BLOOD DRIVE

'People can donate blood every 56 days. It should become part of their ritual ... And kids everywhere use blood.'

Mary Jane Happy
—Phoebe Foundation

Once every 56 days

"It's important that people take advantage of opportunities to donate," said Happy, about Monday's Red Cross blood drive in Farmington Hills. "People can donate blood every 56 days. It should become part of their ritual ... And kids *everywhere* use blood."

The Red Cross also is trying to urge people to get into the habit of donating, even when there is no personal urgency to do so.

Risko explained that it takes an hour to donate a pint of blood, "and in that hour, you'll help save three lives. So it's a good tradeoff."

But people usually don't get involved unless there's a personal connection, said Risko, estimating that only 5 percent of eligible adults age 17 and over donate blood.

"That's not enough," Risko continued. "... You never know when you or somebody you know is in a car accident" and in dire need of emergency blood.

One person who needed such help was Farmington High School student Melissa Garr, critically injured in a freakish poolside accident in July 1997.

Melissa, now recovering nicely, again is lending support to the Red Cross blood drive Monday at Farmington Hills Fire Headquarters. She also spends time at school on behalf of the Red Cross' plight -- promoting awareness of the problem and imploring classmates to donate blood.

The teen, now 17, was injured when a heavy tree branch fell and struck her on the head, putting her in a coma.

For information about the Jan. 25 blood drive in Farmington Hills, call (248) 426-4400 or (248) 477-7358. The fire headquarters is located next to the police station on the southwest corner of Orchard Lake-11 Mile.

Trial resumes today

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

The trial conspiracy charge of a California woman awaiting a heart transplant was expected to resume today Thursday, Jan. 21, in Oakland Circuit Court with the prosecution's main witness continuing to testify.

The witness, William R. Leflet, told jurors he obtained a kilo of cocaine in November 1991, as part of an agreement between him, defendant Mindy R. Brass and three other people in San Diego. Brass was aware the drugs were to be sold in the Detroit area, he testified, and he denied trying to intimidate or threaten Brass.

Leflet and Emil Mardenli were arrested in Troy, when they tried to sell a kilo of cocaine to undercover police in December, 1991. They subsequently implicated Brass, who was subsequently convicted of conspiring to deliver a controlled substance and sentenced to live in prison.

While in prison in 1993, Brass suffered a severe heart attack that doctors said left her in need of a heart transplant. She is currently on the organ transplant waiting list at the University of Michigan Medical Center.

A new trial for Brass was ordered in July after an Oakland Circuit judge said defense attorneys should have had access to information that would enable them to challenge the credibility of Leflet. That trial started Jan. 4, but was disrupted for three days last week when Brass collapsed in the courtroom and was rushed to the hospital.

The trial could go to the jury later this week.

Friends: *Robin Fraser of Farmington Hills stays close to Mindy Brass who faces drug conspiracy charges in Oakland County Circuit Court.*

Libertarians to meet today

Oakland County Libertarians will meet from 6-10 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 27, in the Eastside Mario's, 29267 Southfield Road, Southfield, chairman John Robertson has announced.

Officers will be elected for 1999. Candidates are invited to attend and let fellow Libertarians know in advance by calling secretary Lorna Tate at (248) 588-6100.

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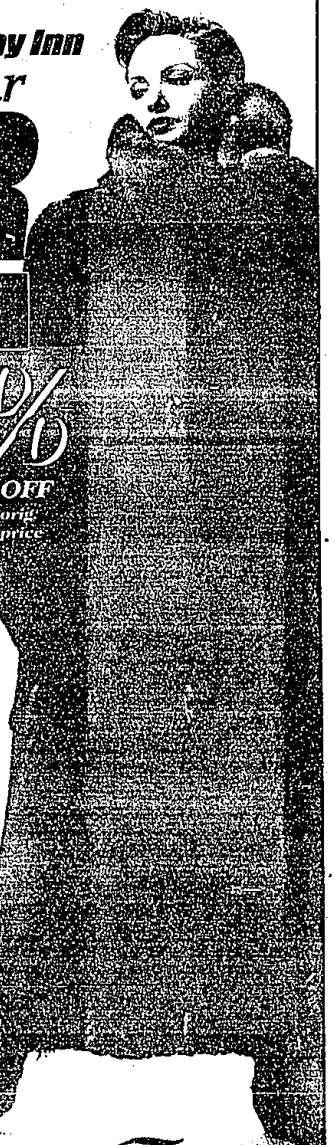

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