

Lifeline

Donors line up to help build up dwindling blood supplies

By TIM SMITH
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Sarah Primeau never donated blood before. But then she heard about the emergency need for donations, and was one of many first-timers to show up Monday at the Farmington Hills Fire Headquarters.

"It's not exactly enjoyable," Primeau said, reclining on a bench after donating her pint, one of 165 collected at the Orchard Lake-11 Mile facility. "But it's worth it, because I heard they (American Red Cross) were short of blood."

"I figured it could be a relative who needs a blood transfusion someday."

Primeau, an employee at Novi Community Credit Union, said several colleagues were also coming out to the blood drive. Among them was her boss, Bob Hingberg, vice president at the credit union.

"This is important," Primeau said. "I'll do it again." The blood drive also brought out veterans such as Diane Gaydek of Northville, an employee for the city of Farmington Hills.

"I think if everybody did it they wouldn't have these pleas constantly" about needing to alleviate the blood shortage, Gaydek said. "Everybody here today needs to come back."

Gaydek said she personally views it as an "obligation" to make it a point to donate regularly.

Dedicated donors

According to Diane Risko of the American Red Cross, bad weather contributed to a slow start Monday. But activity increased during the late afternoon and evening.

"It was a very successful drive," Risko said. "... We had many first-time donors."

The donated blood, separated into plastic pouches for platelets, red blood cells and plasma, was immediately shipped to the Red Cross' main offices in downtown Detroit to be tested, Risko said. Blood determined to be healthy then is transported to hospitals, where it is almost immediately used.

"It (blood) may go by taxi, that's how low the supply is," Risko said. "We'll see taxis lined up to take the blood as soon as it's processed."

The December holidays, and early January snowstorms, contributed to the region's emergency blood bank being in the worst shape it's been in 15 years, Risko said earlier. The blood bank serves 54 hospitals.

Monday's blood drive at the fire department head-

quarters was the fourth in the name of Farmington teen Melissa Garr, who is recovering from critical injuries sustained in a July 1997 accident. The first drive (in September 1997) netted 187 pints. Subsequent efforts, in January and August 1998, resulted in 125 and 163 pints, respectively.

Melissa, a senior at Farmington High School, came to the blood drive to donate. She wore a "I Want Your Blood" badge on her shirt. Close friend and classmate Amanda Faughnan accompanied her.

Farmington Hills Fire Lt. Mike Garr, Melissa's dad, said Melissa "likes to champion the cause, this is one she personally identifies with."

He emphasized that people need to get into the habit of donating, whether or not they know somebody who is in dire need of blood — as Melissa was after a heavy tree branch fell on her head, resulting in a coma.

"You can't take it for granted that everybody else is making the donation," Mike Garr said, "and that when you need it will be there."

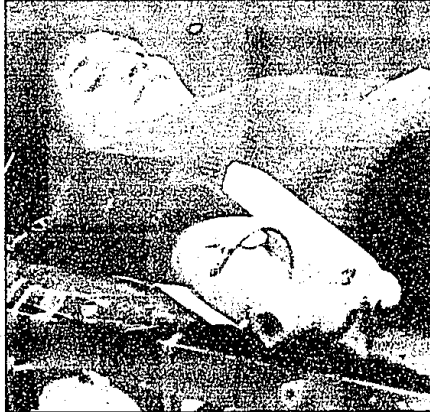
Feeling good

For some of the donors, such as Caren Collins of the

Please see BLOOD, A8



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BRADLEY



Lining up: Above, a steady stream of blood donors rolled up their sleeves for the Red Cross at the Farmington Hills Fire Department Monday. Ann Osgood gives her pint, one of an estimated 165 pints donated. Many who donated said they felt it was their obligation. And Red Cross officials said they had many first-time donors who came to the drive.

More area blood drives scheduled

Red Cross spokesperson Diane Risko listed the following as Farmington area blood drives scheduled for the next several weeks:

■ Thursday, Feb. 4, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., DMC Health Care on 12 Mile Road.

■ Thursday-Friday, Feb. 11-12, 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. each day, Mercy Health Systems on 12 Mile.

■ Wednesday, Feb. 17, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge campus.

■ Wednesday, Feb. 24, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., DMR Financial Services.

■ Friday, Feb. 26, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., North Farmington High School, for students and staff only.

Persons can give blood once every 56 days, provided they are healthy.

Meanwhile, another blood drive at the Farmington Hills Fire Headquarters will probably take place in August.

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