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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN MARION TO HOST SPECIAL APHERESIS DONATION OPPORTUNITY



Contact:

Christy Jergens, Public Information Officer
Christy.Jergens@FLHealth.gov
352-629-0137, ext. 2052
Mobile: 352-266-5597

OCALA, Fla.—Most people never meet the individuals who benefit from their specific blood donations. Donating blood is an altruistic act. That’s one reason why it’s special when people devote even more of their time to donate blood in a different way, through apheresis. On Thursday, May 4, the Florida Department of Health in Marion County hopes to grow the ranks of apheresis platelet donors during a special blood drive to help area residents in need.

Apheresis donors give blood platelets instead of “whole” blood. Platelets help blood clot, and these donations are critical for some, including cancer patients, trauma victims and people with clotting disorders. It takes about 2 hours to complete each donation; non-platelet blood parts are transfused back to the patient during the same visit. Apheresis donation is the best way to obtain platelets because one apheresis donation provides as many platelets as five whole blood donations.

Director of Community Health Programs Meaghan Crowley learned the importance of platelet donors when her father, Daniel, was diagnosed with cancer. His cancer was attacking his platelets. To stay alive, he needed weekly platelet transfusions.

“His body wasn’t making enough platelets for his blood to clot,” said Crowley. “Without those transfusions, every bump, bruise, cut or scratch, even a sneeze or cough, could be life-threatening.”

Patients who depend on platelet donations are vulnerable to a lack of supply, however, due to the fragility of platelets compared to whole blood products. Platelets must be used within five days of a donation, and it can be difficult to find enough donors to meet the need.

“Every week, we sat in the hospital waiting to see if there was a platelet donation available, praying that someone out there had been willing to donate. There were several times during shortages when we didn’t know if we were going to be able to find a donor in time,” Crowley said. “I am forever grateful to the hundreds of donors who were willing to give my dad the gift of life and give me the gift of extra time with him.”

To schedule an appointment to donate blood or platelets at the department’s Ocala facility (1801 SE 32nd Ave., Ocala) during its whole blood and platelet drive with LIFESouth Community Blood Centers, contact Meaghan Crowley at 352-629-0137, ext. 2204 or email

meaghan.crowley@flhealth.gov. Apheresis donors must pre-schedule their slots. The drive will last from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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