



The Carol H. Axelrod Memorial Blood Drive

Many of the donors at our blood drives are aware of our family's story (and if you happen not to be, you can find the "short version" on the other side of this page!). As many of you know, we started holding our drives as a way to thank and give back to the blood donor community that made it possible for our loved one to receive all of the blood and platelet transfusions she needed during her treatment for multiple myeloma, an incurable cancer of the blood and bone marrow.

Our story, however, is just one example of countless situations in which blood transfusions are used to help a person in need. The truth is that blood transfusions are necessary in so many circumstances that, according to the American Red Cross, somebody in the United States requires a lifesaving blood transfusion every two seconds.

We recently had the privilege of hearing the story of another grateful recipient who, like Carol, received transfusions at Lankenau Medical Center. Frank Dieter, a former teacher at Bala Cynwyd Junior High/Middle School, spent several weeks at Lankenau this past summer following heart surgery. After being hospitalized for 48 days, Frank was able to go home to his family—and he feels that he owes his life to blood donors. Here, in his own words, is Frank's story:

I have a condition known as HHT. It involves blood/oxygen exchange at the capillary level, which is everywhere. Short circuits at this level create bleeds. My lifelong curse has been nosebleeds, mostly short, but some noteworthy. Blood thinners (caffeine, chocolate, aspirin, turmeric, alcohol) will prolong and intensify a bleed, no matter where in my body.

Consequently, when my heart valve needed repairing, the use of thinners came up. There was no way around using thinners, so I bit the bullet and had the valve repaired. Two days later my right ventricle started dragging its feet, meaning more heart surgery, blood thinners, and an external mechanical pump to assist my lazy ventricle. After this second surgery I was loaded with thinners, and [experienced] major nosebleeds for a week.

I was on the edge of life. For that week I was given 4 units of blood per day, and 1 to 2 units per day for another 3 weeks. Without a good supply of O-negative, I was doomed.

Thank you, donors, whoever you were.

What is so important to remember is that Frank's story reflects the needs of just one patient, in one hospital, in one city. In order to survive, Frank needed dozens of units of blood over the course of just a few weeks. And his story is the story of other people who are also living with HHT—as well as that of hospital patients who are being treated for cancer, for sickle cell disease, for burns, for complications during childbirth, for trauma, and for numerous other circumstances in which survival may be dependent upon the availability of blood products.

As a blood donor, you make it possible for someone like Frank to leave the hospital and return home to his family. We join Frank in thanking all of our incredible donors for your wonderful act of generosity!

Sincerely,
Michelle, Dan, and Emily Scolnick 

COMMUNITY CHALLENGE UPDATE

This October, our Community CHALLENGE will benefit

Narberth Community Food Bank

and

Tree House Books

Narberth Community Food Bank

Serving the food insecure and providing additional resources throughout Narberth and Lower Merion.

Narberth Community Food Bank
201 Sabine Avenue, 2nd Floor ♦ Narberth, PA 19072
www.narberthcommunityfoodbank.org

♦ ♦ ♦

Tree House Books

Working to give every child in Philadelphia free access to high-quality books and literacy programming.

Tree House Books
1430 W. Susquehanna Avenue ♦ Philadelphia, PA 19121
www.treehousebooks.org

Visit www.chablooddrive.org to learn about all of the organizations that have taken part in our CHALLENGE!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

THE CAROL H. AXELROD MEMORIAL BLOOD DRIVE

~ 2020 DATES ~

February 28, 2020

The Shipley School - Bryn Mawr, PA

♦

May 5, 2020

Radnor Township Municipal Building - Wayne, PA

♦

July 15, 2020

The Reserve at Gwynedd - Lansdale, PA

♦

October 2020 - Dates TBD

For more information about any of our blood drives, please visit

www.chablooddrive.org

Follow us on Twitter and Facebook: @CHABloodDrive
and on Instagram: @cha_blooddrive

The Story Behind Our Family's Blood Drives

Our family knows from personal experience that blood donors give hospital patients and their loved ones an incomparable gift: the gift of time. Whether a blood donation is used to save a life, to prolong a life, or to improve the quality of life, it allows families to spend more time together, making special memories. Thanks to the generosity of blood donors, our family was given another year with the mother, grandmother, daughter, sister, and aunt we loved.

Carol, a single mother of two daughters, was an elementary school teacher in Philadelphia for over 30 years. In April 2003, she was 55 years old and starting to look ahead to retirement when she was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, an incurable cancer of the blood and bone marrow. In 2004, Carol's disease progressed to the point where her doctor recommended that she undergo two autologous stem-cell transplants, the most aggressive treatment then available to myeloma patients. Although the procedures did put her disease into remission, the cancer returned less than a year later, and in an extremely aggressive form.

In July 2007, just two months before her 60th birthday, Carol was hospitalized as the result of a complication of her illness. At that point, the only thing the doctors could do to try to stabilize the situation was give her multiple transfusions of blood and platelets and hope that her body would eventually start to do what it needed to do to heal itself.

For almost two weeks, Carol received multiple transfusions each day. The doctors said that she could die at any time, especially if they were unable to find the blood products she needed. But incredibly, those blood products were always there—because of all the people who had donated the blood that the doctors were using to try to save her life.

Thanks to blood donors, Carol ultimately was able to leave the hospital. Although she could not resume treatment for the cancer, she was able to live independently and enjoy almost all of her usual activities because, for nearly a year, she received blood and platelet transfusions at least twice a week. Thanks to blood donors, she was able to celebrate her 60th birthday and see her granddaughter turn three years old. And thanks to blood donors, Carol lived until July 1, 2008, enabling her to make a year's worth of memories with her loved ones.

Our family feels that we owe all the special memories of that last year to the generosity of blood donors. Carol's doctors told us that they had never had a patient who was transfusion-dependent for as long as she was. They were amazed that she lived as long as she did, with her only treatment being transfusions of blood and platelets. We were so grateful that the blood products she needed were always available for her.

After Carol passed away, our family organized a blood drive in her memory at Lankenau Medical Center, the hospital where she had received the transfusions. Held in October 2008, it turned out to be the hospital's most successful blood drive up to that point. We decided to turn the blood drive into an annual event and hold it in multiple locations. With every blood drive we hold, we hope to be able to help even more people who need transfusions. Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood; and nine out of ten people will require a blood transfusion at some point during their lives.

Blood donors were the only people who could give our family an extra year with Carol. We created this memorial blood drive in order to help other patients and families by doing our part to ensure that blood products are always available for those who need them. Thanks to donors who are willing to take a little time out of their day to give blood, these patients are able to continue to fight their illnesses—and spend more time with their loved ones.