



Don Campbell / HP files

Scott Johnson, a nurse with the American Red Cross, talks with Randy Enos, 72, as he prepares to donate blood last April at the Berrien County Chapter of the American Red Cross. Area blood centers say supplies are running low.

Blood drives come at prime time

By JULIE SWIDWA
HP Staff Writer

Blood donations decrease in winter weather and during holiday seasons, but the need for blood never takes a holiday.

Kristen Nauss, community relations coordinator for Michigan Blood, and Tiana Davidson, executive director for the Southwest Michigan chapter of the American Red Cross, said the need is especially high after the massive pile-up on I-94 near Kalamazoo last week during a winter storm.

"People were sent to hospitals in Battle Creek and Kalamazoo, and we had these emergencies on top of the usually low blood supply in the winter months and after the holidays," Nauss said.

She said the winter storm and subsequent accidents could not have come at a

worse time.

"We just came out of a holiday. More than 20 percent of our mobile blood drives are with high schools and colleges, and they were closed."

She and Davidson said what makes winter especially tough is that the blood collection organizations cannot anticipate when emergencies like last week's massive crash are going to occur.

"There's always a need for blood and we are always encouraging folks to help stay ahead of the game. We never know when disaster will occur. When you donate a unit of blood, you save three lives," Davidson said.

She said summer months can be challenging, too, when people are away on vacations.

Nauss said emergencies like last week's accident on the interstate tend to get people's attention.

"Donors heeded the call, and some people traveled outside their area to donate. It's unfortunate that it takes an emergency like this. We appreciate the response, but our big thing is we hope people will come back and become a regular donor."

Nauss said Michigan Blood has a particularly dire need for O- and O+ blood. O- is the universal type of blood that anyone with any blood type can receive. When doctors don't know a person's blood type, they automatically transfuse O-.

"We're always looking for all types of blood, but that is the extreme need right now," Nauss said.

The Michigan Blood donation center is open every Wednesday from noon to 7 p.m. at 2710 Cleveland Ave., St. Joseph. Mobile drives are held at other locations on other days.

Michigan Blood has the

following mobile blood drives set in the area for this month:

■ Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, 58620 Sink Road, Dowagiac, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. today

■ Sister Lakes Community Church, 6119 M-152, Dowagiac, 3-7 p.m. Thursday

■ Countryside Academy, 4800 Meadowbrook Road, Benton Harbor, 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Friday

■ Eau Claire High School, 7450 Hochberger Road, Eau Claire, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Jan. 23

■ Lake Michigan College, 2755 E. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Jan. 26

■ Bright Star Tabernacle, 5130 Old Pipestone Road, Eau Claire, 2-7 p.m. Jan. 27

■ Bridgman Public Library, 4460 Lake St., Bridgman, 1-5 p.m. Jan. 28

■ Upton Middle School, 800 Maiden Lane, St. Jo-

seph, 1-7 p.m. Jan. 29

■ Lakeland Regional Medical Center, 1234 Napier Ave., St. Joseph, 9:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Jan. 30.

More information is available at miblood.org.

The American Red Cross Southwest Michigan chapter has the following blood drives scheduled this month and next:

■ American Red Cross, 3838 Niles Road, St. Joseph, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. today

■ Lake Michigan Catholic High School, 915 Pleasant St., St. Joseph, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 20

■ American Red Cross, 3838 Niles Road, St. Joseph, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Feb. 18

■ Andrews University Pioneer Memorial, 400 University Blvd., Berrien Springs, 1-7 p.m. Feb. 25.

More information is available at redcrossblood.org.

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