

1980 – I saw him standing in front of Gengras Student Union on the campus of the University of Hartford. He was behind a table that had pamphlets and posters hawking yet another very important cause. “You need to have some leaches and dissecting trays and scalpels,” I calmly suggested. He looked at me and a warm smile penetrated through the beard that was the style of those that eschewed style - unless it included tie-die and patches and hair everywhere (Yes, I had hair, *and* it reached my butt.).

The primary color of the literature and table decorations was red – No, this was not a drive for the Communist Party. My newly made friend, Alex (you Clearwater folks know him as Ajax), wanted to suck the blood out of my body. I let him. So for the past 28 years I have shared my life’s blood, literally. I can honestly say that it has been the single most rewarding societal act in which I have participated, because, I know that there is an immediate positive result. It crosses all political, religious, and socio-economic barriers. I don’t know or care who my blood helps. It helps another human. Period. Their life is better because I have spent a half hour laying down and then eating cookies and juice. There is about 15 seconds of pinch-like pain and then nature takes its course.

My son has accompanied me since he could stand. He has seen the donors come and lie down just like his father. They are also a cross section of our country. They are there because they are willing to give of themselves. He has seen the first-timers, timidly lying down and scrunching up their eyes, waiting for the lamppost size needle to rip their arms apart. He has heard them say, “That wasn’t so bad – just a second and then it was fine.” He has heard the banter of the donors and the professionals, together for a short time, making things just a bit better in our fragile little world. He has learned that he can make a difference.

One of the coolest moments in my entire life happened in Hartford in the early 80’s. There was a donation center downtown and my 56 day waiting period was up. I went inside and waited for them to check me in. It was a typical day, about four or five donors were ahead of me on the tables and filling out their medical history forms. When it was my turn, the woman who was reviewing my history commented that I was O+. She signaled to a co-worker and when I lay down on the table they brought over a cluster of four small bags.

“What’s that?” I asked.

“It’s called a quad. It’s for infants. There is a baby at Hartford hospital that needs O+ blood. We’ve been waiting for you to come in.”

It still makes my day whenever I think of that moment.

So I am thrilled to announce that Randolph School is sponsoring our first ever blood drive. It will be after school on Monday, March 17th. Yes, St. Patrick’s Day, 2008. We will be starting at 3:00 and ending at 7:00. You can donate when you pick up your children – free afterschool for all donors – or come back after supper. Bring your children so that they can see how brave you are and that you are making a difference. If you are not sure if you can donate, the experts will be happy to answer your questions. I am asking for every parent, teacher and student (16 and over) to please, be brave, and donate. I am also asking for everyone to try to bring two people to donate, even if you can’t donate yourself. Randolph School has a history of rallying for the good cause. This will cost you nothing, but a little time. Here is an opportunity to join together to give life to our greater community and an even deeper gift to our students and each other.

Thank you,
Brad