



August 2, 2016

## **It's Important that African Americans Donate Blood**

According to The American Red Cross, it is important that African-Americans give blood. Increasing African-American donations is vital because blood types O and B, the blood types of about 70 percent of African-Americans, are the blood types most in demand. African American blood donations can help African-Americans suffering from rare blood disorders and certain diseases such as sickle cell anemia, hypertension, lupus and prostate cancer, which are more prevalent among African Americans.

The American Red Cross reports that one of every ten people admitted to a hospital needs blood. Every pint of donated blood can help to save the lives of three people. As a member of the Human Service Appropriations Committee, I fought to restore funding for the UIC Sickle Cell Center. Another strong reason to donate blood is that sickle cell disease affects more than 80,000 people in the United States and sickle cell patients require frequent blood transfusions.

“The impact of these illnesses can often lead to treatments which require frequent blood transfusions and the most reaction-free match but yet least available, would be that of another African American. This type of match is extremely limited due to the fact that nationally, African Americans donate less than 1% of the country’s blood supply. If there are more African Americans in the donor pool, there is a greater chance of matching the needs sickle cell and other patients. ICCBC is extremely grateful to everyone that is joining us today to help us turn that trend around in order to improve the quality of and lengthen the lives of so many individuals”, said Ann McKanna of Heartland Blood Centers and Illinois Coalition of Community Blood Centers (ICCBC) President.

It is important to understand that not only are blood donors needed, but more importantly, people who are willing to help host and coordinate blood drives in our communities. Because blood only has a shelf life of 42 days, it is important that drives are not just held once, but on an annual or semi-annual basis, establishing a new tradition of saving lives.

The number of victims of shootings in Chicago is very high, and the highest number is on the West Side of Chicago. According to the Chicago Tribune, as of August 1, 2016, there have been over 2,395 shooting victims in just 16 communities in Chicago. The 16 communities include Austin(280), Garfield Park(211), and North Lawndale(142). As of August 1<sup>st</sup>, Austin had 43 homicides in 280 shootings, Garfield Park had 24 homicides in 211 shootings and North Lawndale had 16 homicides in 142 shootings. The violence and the number of shooting victims on the West Side are more reasons to consider donating blood.

Donors must be at least 17 years old to donate. However, some states allow 16-year-olds to donate blood with parental consent. A parent will need to review the Student's Guide to Blood Donation (also available in Spanish) and sign the parent/guardian consent form for the young adult to be able to donate blood.

Illinois allows 16-year-olds to donate with parental consent; the student should just bring a signed consent form to the blood bank of his or her choice. A signed consent form is required each time the student plans to donate.

Every 2 seconds, someone needs a blood transfusion - that is why I have been a regular blood donor since high school. It feels great knowing that blood has a value that money can't buy. Your blood donation can help save up to three lives.

Please call one of the blood banks to schedule your appointment to donate blood.

1-800-RED CROSS ([1-800-733-2767](tel:1-800-733-2767))

Lifesource ([773-327-2602](tel:773-327-2602))

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford  
State Representative-Eighth District