



Illinois Coalition of Community Blood Centers

Contact: Margaret Vaughn
217-280-0206
mvaughn@springnet1.com
www.illinoisbloodcenters.com

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONGRESSMAN DAVIS & REP. LA SHAWN FORD CALL FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS TO DONATE BLOOD & HOST DRIVES

Chicago - In conjunction with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend, the Illinois Coalition of Community Blood Centers (ICCBC) joined forces with the states' top African American leaders and medical experts today at Mercy Hospital, to kick off their **"Make Every Drop Count"** campaign, aimed at increasing blood donations among the state's African Americans.

Unfortunately, rare blood traits and certain diseases such as sickle cell anemia, hypertension, lupus and prostate cancer are more prevalent among African Americans.

"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.

"The number one reason people don't donate blood is because they have never been asked," said Rep. La Shawn K. Ford. "Marketing and advertising are no match for the encouragement of a friend, relative or co-worker to donate blood. 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," continued Rep. Ford.

Rep. Ford has been a strong advocate of blood donation and has regularly hosted church and community group blood drives in his district.

“Because African American blood traits are such a “tough match” when it comes to transfusions, it is important that we, as public officials, are able to get the message out that by not donating blood, we as African Americans, are putting each other at risk. With the start of 2012, I ask that becoming a regular blood donor is a New Year’s Resolution you stick with, in order to save lives in our community,” said Congressman Davis, of the 7th Congressional District.

ICCBC and the Black Caucus are planning another press conference at the Statehouse in Springfield on February 8th, in conjunction with African American History month.

Individuals can donate blood every 56 days. Donors must be 17 years of age (16 with parental consent) and weigh at least 110 pounds. The entire donation process including health screening usually takes about an hour.

If you would like to “Make Every Drop Count” please call 1-888-USBLOOD (1-888-872-5663) to donate blood locally or help coordinate a drive.

Pictured in the photo left to right: Rep. Ken Dunkin, Rep. La Shawn Ford, ICCBC President Ann McKanna (Heartland), Dr. Niva Campbell-Lee, 4th District Representative Candidate Elgie Sims, Congressman Danny Davis, Dr. Sally Lubin-Johnson, Rep. Will Davis, Margaret Vaughn ICCBC Director, Darren Adams (Kappa Alpha Psi), Rep. Derrick Smith and Andrew McElroy (LifeSource).

ABOUT Illinois Coalition of Community Blood Centers: *Founded in 2002, ICCBC is a statewide organization made up of not-for-profit blood centers whose mission is to increase awareness of the importance of volunteer blood donation through public education and advocacy. To learn more go to www.illinoisbloodcenters.com.*

For more information, contact Rep. Ford at his constituent service office at 773-378-5902, or visit www.lashawnford.com.

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