

# THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

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## Protect your identity

MAGGIE JIRASEK

Editor-in-Chief

More and more people are becoming the victims of identity theft, a crime in which an individual steals someone else's identity and impersonates that person in order to open credit card accounts, rent apartments, even engage in criminal acts.

According to Equifax, a consumer-reporting agency, identity theft is one of the fastest-growing crimes in America and has become a national crisis. It is estimated that there are between 500,000 to 700,000 identity-theft victims a year.

Identity thieves steal key pieces of individual's identities such as Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers, credit card numbers, ATM cards or telephone calling cards. They use a variety of ways to gain this personal information, including stealing people's mail, "Dumpster diving", stealing wallets and purses, grabbing information off internet sites that are not secure and completing a "change of address form" at

the post office.

The effects of identity theft can be devastating. In most cases, once the crime is discovered, the thief has already wrecked the victim's credit stand-

ing. Oftentimes, victims are left with a damaged credit standing and spend months or even years trying to regain

their credit-worthiness.

Clackamas student Crystal Castleman had an experience with identity thieves herself.

"In October, my car was broken into and they stole my purse. I had all my cards and everything in there. Although I canceled my account, the thieves were still able to use my cards and write checks. It has affected me financially. I am still paying off overdraft fees," said Castleman. "If something like this happens over the weekend and you have to wait until Monday to cancel your bank account, it can hurt you pretty bad. I'm really careful now."

Equifax points out that "(p)revention is the first step in battling identity theft." There are some guidelines you can follow to minimize the risk of someone stealing your identity:

- Carry only the cards that you need to have with you
- Sign your credit cards immediately
- Do not carry a social se-

curity card with you.

• Do not attach a PIN number to any cards you carry with you

• Shred any document that contains your credit card number before you discard it

• Alert your card issuer if you do not receive your statements

• Frequently check your credit report

If you are a victim of identity theft, there are a few steps you should follow immediately: file a report with your local police or the police where the theft took place; close accounts that have been fraudulently accessed or opened; and contact the security departments of the appropriate creditors or financial institutions.

There are three major credit bureaus: Experian (formerly TRW), Equifax and Trans Union. In case of an identity theft, you should call the fraud units of the three companies. You can reach them at 1-800-525-6285 (Equifax), 1-888-397-3742 (Experian) or 1-800-680-7289 (Trans Union).



MIKE POLLOCK / Clackamas Print

**An estimated 500,000 and 700,000 people become victims of identity theft every year. Identity thieves steal key pieces of individual's identities such as Social Security card numbers, driver's license numbers, ATM cards and calling cards.**

## Donors give Red Cross a shot in the arm

ELISABETH MEYER

Staff Writer

A combination of good organization and more than enough donors boosted collections above ASG's goal for Monday's blood drive.

Meeting the 45-pint mark suggested by the Red Cross would've been accomplishment enough; the fall drive didn't quite reach its goal. Jenny Lowe, one of the ASG officers who is organizing the drive, attributed the shortfall of the fall drive to people forgetting their commitment.

"Last time, I reminded (donors)

right before Thanksgiving break," Lowe said. "They had a whole week to forget."

A difference that elementary is often crucial, said the collection team's head nurse, Barbara Wilson.

"Something as simple as bad weather or a holiday can keep people from coming out," she said. But even under good circumstances, turnout isn't stellar. "We figure about 50 percent of people who sign up actually show up," she added.

Wilson called the drive "wonderful" and attributed the success to ASG's efforts in arranging the event and reminding pledgers to keep their appointments. "We were over goal. We wanted 45 pints, we'll have at least 65... that's awesome," she said. "Jennifer (Lowe) did a great job."

Many of Monday's donors hadn't donated in the fall drive. In October, the Red Cross added regulations about mad cow disease to its restrictions on donation. Potential donors who have spent six months or more in Britain and Western Europe in the past 20 years are now ineligible.

Other stringent regulations,

besides the obvious blood-transmitted disease and noninfectious blood disease issues such as Kreutzfeld-Jakob disease or hemophilia, include simply being in good health and having adequate iron.

The Red Cross requires the iron level in blood to be higher than necessary for good health to give blood. When a would-be donor barely missed the standard, Collection Assistant Joan Dernbach reassured her, "It doesn't mean you're anemic. You just wouldn't feel good if you donated."

Volunteer Al Crompton said that of the 10 percent who are typically deferred, a few have colds. Most have low iron levels. "What you need," he joked, "is a good stout Guinness. Eat liver, eat green vegetables, and drink dark beer."

Dernbach agreed that diet makes a difference in iron level, which fluctuates radically for women. "It's all about the (iron rich) Cream of Wheat," she said.

Wilson noted that drives at colleges and high schools are frequently more successful than drives at other locations because "...you (students) are young,



MAGGIE JIRASEK / Clackamas Print

**Tiffany Risinger is one of many Clackamas students who volunteered to donate blood last Monday, Feb. 11, in the Gregory Forum. The event was coordinated by the ASG.**

enthusiastic, and you want to give something...that's part of what makes medicine and nursing so fun."

Despite the drive's success, Lowe still seems to have bigger

things in mind.

"With 27,000 students at Clackamas, you'd think more would donate," she mused Friday. "I know some of them are transfer students, but really."

### What's Inside?

Opinion...Page 2-3

News...Pages 4

Feature...Pages 5

A & E...Pages 6-7

V-Day...Page 8-9

Sports...Pages 10-11

The End...Page 12