

Baby with terminal cancer holds on thanks to Red Cross donors

CONTRIBUTED STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

For 22-month-old Trent Sims, blood transfusions are away of life. Trent has Acute Myeloblastic Leukemia (AML), a rare form of cancer and needs regular transfusions to help prevent and treat complications related to his condition. Unfortunately, a nationwide blood shortage is making it difficult for American Red Cross to meet the needs of patients like Trent, who must have transfusions to stay alive.

"If it weren't for blood donors, this beautiful baby would not be here," said his mother, Octavia McKinney. "The cancer has taken over his blood and marrow. Without the blood and blood products he receives through the American Red Cross, his twin sister Hannah wouldn't have been able to get to know him and make memories with him."

"Trent's birthday is on July 8, but we're not sure he'll be with us for that long," said his mother. American Red Cross will host an early birthday party for Trent and Hannah and a celebration for all children who have received blood transfusions, Sunday, June 25th from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. at the Portland Center. The party is for all children who have received blood transfusions and their families. The community is invited to participate in this special celebration and in a blood drive from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. where healthy adults may give the gift of life in honor of children like Trent Sims. The Portland Donor Center is located at 3131 N. Vancouver Ave. in Portland. "We'll be celebrating Red Cross blood donors that day, too," said Octavia, "because they've already given him a present - they made it possible for him to get even this far in life."

Trent has been hospitalized for more than five months, and his family knows his cancer is terminal. Still, they continue to hope for a miracle. Until then, Trent spends nine hours each day in a hematology clinic at Doernbecher Children's Hospital and receives at least three transfusions each week.

The Red Cross issued a Yellow Alert on June 12 because blood supplies are much lower than optimal levels, while transfusion rates have increased. Across the nation, the demand for blood and blood products has skyrocketed, and eight of Red Cross' 36 blood regions have gone on appeal, asking donors to help meet the needs of trauma, cancer and accident victims. "We know there's a blood shortage right now, and we want to help in any way we can to let people know that lives are saved with every donation," said Octavia.

"I know it's not always easy to find time to come in and donate, especially when people get busy with summer activities," says Octavia. "But our family, Trent's brother and sisters, and all the people whose lives he's touched will be forever grateful to people who give blood. We may not have much time left with Trent, but we appreciate every moment of his life."

Donors must be 17 or older, weigh at least 105 pounds and be in good general health. Please call 503/284-4040 or 1-800-GIVE-LIFE for more information or to schedule an appointment at a blood drive near you.

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