

Local blood donations can save lives around the country

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Lives were being saved at the Hermiston Public Library on Monday.

While patrons browsed through books on the main floor, people were trickling into a city-sponsored Red Cross blood drive.

Karis Miller, one of several phlebotomists on site, said Red Cross employees in the Tri-Cities area spend their days traveling to churches, athletic clubs, libraries, hospitals, schools and other places willing to host a drive.

High schools and universities are one of the most popular donor sites. According to the Red Cross, 31 percent of donors last year were ages 16 to 24.

On the other end of the spectrum are many retired donors who have been donating regularly for years.

“The older donors who donate all the time are starting to pass away and the next generation isn’t stepping up,” Miller said.

After the blood is collected, it is sent to a processing center in Portland where it is tested for diseases, such as hepatitis, and separated out into three components: red blood cells, plasma and platelets. The components are then packaged and sent to hospitals, which have a contract with the Red Cross for a certain amount

Red Cross announces blood drives

In the coming weeks, the American Red Cross will hold several blood drives in the area

The need for blood is constant, especially during the cold winter months. Each day, blood donors help patients of all ages — from accident and burn victims to heart surgery and organ transplant patients.

Upcoming blood drives in Hermiston, unless otherwise noted:

•Monday, Jan 14 from 10:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. at New Hope Community Church, 1350 S. Highway 395.

•Friday, Jan 18 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at city of Umatilla, 700 Sixth St., Umatilla.

•Monday, Jan. 21 from noon to 6 p.m. at Good Shepherd Medical Center, 610 N.W. 11th St.

•Friday, Feb. 1 from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Stafford Hansell Government Center, 915 S.E. Columbia Drive.

While walk-ins are welcome, donors are encouraged to schedule an appointment by calling 1-800-733-2767 or via www.redcrossblood.org.

of blood per month in addition to extra supplies during a crisis. Red blood cells can be stored for up to 42 days, platelets are stored for up to five days and plasma can be frozen and saved for up to a year.

Usually blood processed at the Portland center will stay nearby, but if there is a surplus or a greater need somewhere else in the country, a donation in Oregon could end up in a patient in North Carolina.

If a hospital in Eastern Oregon needs more blood urgently they don’t have to wait for it to be brought all the way from Portland.

David Rodriguez, a volunteer working at the blood drive Monday, is one of the volunteers on call 24 hours a day to transport blood. When Good Shepherd Medical Center has an un-

pected number of patients coming into the emergency room in need of blood, for example, he might get a call that he needs to pick some up from Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland and bring it down to Hermiston.

On Monday Rodriguez was doing everything from checking people in to bringing snacks to a first-time donor who was feeling too faint to get up from the cot.

“I’m a people person, and I enjoy getting to go out and meet new people and help these folks,” he said.

He said before he started volunteering for the Red Cross six and a half years ago he was a blood donor. He felt especially grateful for the opportunity to donate after his father had emergency surgery and needed seven pints of blood (donors give a pint at a time).

“It’s just always important,” he said. “People don’t look at it that way, but it could be your own family member or close friend.”

Miller said she finds many of the Red Cross’s donors are inspired by someone close to them whose life was saved by donated blood or plasma.

In addition to its life-saving potential, Miller said donating blood a few times a year also has several health benefits for the donor, including increased cardiovascular health.

“It’s really good for your body, especially men, because they don’t have menstrual periods and so they don’t lose that blood,” she said. “So it’s kind of like an oil change for them. It takes the old stuff out and forces their body to make new.”



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Brandi McDonough gazes at her newborn daughter, Mila. The baby came into the world at 9:56 a.m. on New Year’s Day as her father watched remotely from Iraq.

Technology links father, mother, baby daughter

By **KATHY ANEY AND JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**
STAFF WRITERS

When Umatilla County’s first baby breathed her first breath on New Year’s Day at St. Anthony Hospital, her father watched from thousands of miles away at his base in Iraq.

Mila Marie McDonough came into the world at 9:56 a.m., weighing six pounds, four ounces. Her mom, Brandi McDonough, held her daughter in her arms as Ryan McDonough watched from Brandi’s iPhone screen.

This is the first baby for the Hermiston couple. Brandi learned she was pregnant a week before Ryan deployed.

Ryan is with the Navy Seabees, the military’s elite construction unit. He was working when he got the word his wife had gone into labor just after midnight and had headed to the hospital about 4 a.m. He retired to his room at the base and launched a FaceTime session with Brandi. Part of the time, he used up nervous energy by folding laundry or saying comforting words to his wife. Neither knew whether the baby was a boy or girl.

“We didn’t know the gender,” Brandi said. “We wanted to find out together.”

Ryan will get to hold his baby girl in March or April when he arrives home.

A few hours later, on the other side of the county, a Boardman couple welcomed the first

baby of the year in Hermiston, born at Good Shepherd Medical Center.

Preslee Hope Barnes was born to Audrey Guenther and Bobby Barnes at 1:47 p.m., and weighed seven pounds, five ounces.

Preslee is the first child for the couple, and was born 10 days late. Her parents said they went through about 20 different names before settling on the one they both loved.

“I heard the name on the radio, there was a program where someone said that name,” Barnes said. “I suggested it to Audrey,

and she liked it right away.”

The couple said they were hopeful that Preslee would arrive on her due date, but are now excited to have a

“I’ve wanted to be a parent as long as I can remember, and I’ve always known I was going to have a girl”

Bobby Barnes, new parent

Teen starts new year in remission

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Laylah Sandoval began 2018 with a cancer diagnosis, but she started out 2019 with the disease in the rear-view mirror.

The Hermiston High School student, 16, finished up chemotherapy for osteosarcoma in September, and her first three-month scan came back clear in December. The quiet teenager, hair still close-cropped after losing it all to chemotherapy, wants those who might face similarly scary news in the future to know there is hope.

“It’s hard when you first hear it and you’re going through it, but just know that there are people out there that care about you and you are going to get better,” she said.

In the summer of 2017, she started noticing an occasional pain in one of her legs. The pain turned more consistent as the year went on, and by December she was limping.

Her parents wondered about taking her to see a doctor. But she shrugged it off, convinced it was an injury that would heal on its own.

Just before Christmas, however, she was four-wheeling with her cousins and injured the same leg that had been bothering her for months. Her mother



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Laylah Sandoval, 16, spent 2018 successfully battling with cancer. The Hermiston teen now has a new lease on life having finished up her treatment in September cancer free.

took her to an urgent care clinic, where a doctor noted her leg was swollen and hot to the touch. They referred her to Good Shepherd Medical Center for an X-ray, and later in the day someone from Good Shepherd called and said she needed to come back in immediately.

Sandoval went back with her mother, Marisa Rodriguez, and they heard news no one wants to hear: There appeared to be a tumor in a bone in her leg, and there was a good chance it was malignant.

“Of course that’s scary,”

Rodriguez said. “I don’t have any words to explain it. It felt like I couldn’t breathe. You take that moment to cry, but then as a mother you obviously have to say, ‘What can I do to fix it?’”

Sandoval said although it took a couple of weeks to get a biopsy and an official diagnosis, she had a gut feeling it was cancer the moment she heard she had a tumor.

“I was scared, but really I was more shocked,” she said.

The next nine months Sandoval went through three types of chemotherapy and a surgery to remove the tumor once it had shrunk. She rotated three weeks at a time in Hermiston, then two weeks at Doernbecher Children’s Hospital in Portland.

The chemo made her too tired to do much but sleep during her Portland stays. She missed one semester of school and felt too sick to manage more than two meals a day. Her hair all fell out — something her mom said was hard to take on top of everything else.

Rodriguez, along with Sandoval’s father Adrian Sandoval, brother Isaiah, 15, and various extended fam-

ily members, kept her company and brought her food when she felt a rare craving for something.

“They would try to make me laugh, and help me not think about it,” she said.

Support from her family helped her, she said. The experience forever deepened her relationship with them and helped her understand that she has people in her life who will always be there for her no matter what.

Her family, in return, were strengthened by other things, from their faith to supportive employers who let them take time off.

In September, Sandoval finally got to ring a special bell at Doernbecher that celebrates the end of treatment. A couple of weeks later, when she was feeling stronger, she had a small party with friends and family to celebrate remission.

Both Rodriguez and Sandoval said they want to help spread awareness of cancer, particularly common childhood cancers such as osteosarcoma, in the future.

“You see a lot of breast cancer awareness, but not children’s cancer awareness,” Rodriguez said.

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Love, Grandpa & Grandma Powell

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