

True Stories



Six-year-old twins, Michael and Andrew McCaughey have been receiving blood transfusions since they were babies. They are the only set of fraternal twins in the world with a rare blood disease called Diamond Blackfan Anemia (DBA). DBA is a blood condition that affects approximately 700 people in United States and Canada and is characterized by failure of bone marrow to produce red blood cells. It is estimated that there are only 15,000 people diagnosed with DBA in the world. The disease has been linked to genetic mutation and leukemia and has many symptoms, including decreased energy and sleepiness as well as difficulty in breathing. The twins have a higher likelihood of developing brain tumors and cancer. As Michael and Andrew have grown, so have their problems related to the disease. Both boys suffer from holes in their hearts, short stature, eating problems and developmental delays.

When they were younger, Michael and Andrew had trouble communicating with their parents. The developmental delays caused speech problems which made it difficult for them to tell their parents how they felt or what they needed. Today, the boys are coping with the disease and are better able to communicate with others.

"Having the only set of fraternal twins with DBA was extremely difficult when they were babies. Having one sick child can completely drain a family, doubling that is tremendously demanding" says the boys' mother, Donna McCaughey. "As they grow, I am comforted knowing they have each other to turn to for support with the disease."

DBA affects Michael and Andrew's red blood cell count; therefore, the boys receive blood transfusions to help their bodies adjust. The blood helps them to feel healthy for a short period of time. They are transfused every three to four weeks and require a large amount of blood on a monthly basis.

Transfusion days are hard on Michael and Andrew. They are in the hospital all day and go through many different procedures before they can go home. Before they start to feel the positive effects of the blood transfusion, Michael and Andrew need a full nights rest. After, the boys are full of energy and are able to enjoy many of the same activities that other 6-year old boys enjoy.

38,000 pints of donated blood are used each day in the United States. Blood is perishable and the supply needs to be replenished daily to keep up with the demand. Every two seconds someone in the United States needs blood, it may be for a cancer patient, a car accident survivor, or twin boys with Diamond Blackfan Anemia, like Michael and Andrew. For people all over the United States blood donors are their only life-line. There is no substitute for human blood. Only volunteer blood donors can provide patients with the life saving gift that they need.

Volunteer blood donors provide lifesaving blood to over 4.5 million Americans every year. Millions of people's lives are made better because someone very special took the time to give. Throughout the year, there are many times when the American Red Cross faces critical blood shortages. To ensure that blood is available for every patient who needs it, the American Red Cross urges community members to make

regular blood donations a priority in their lives.

"Most people don't understand (the importance of blood donation) until they are thrown into a situation like ours," says Donna. "There are so many children and adults in need of blood. So much blood is needed every day just to meet the demand."

Each year, Donna sponsors a blood drive in honor of Michael and Andrew to help the blood supply. Last year, 115 pints of blood were collected at her blood drive. Donna encourages others to sponsor blood drives in their communities. This year, Donna collected 118 pints at her drive. Every American Red Cross blood drive is sponsored by a volunteer, just like Donna. Businesses, places of worship, community organizations, and schools all work voluntarily to assure that there is enough blood for anyone in our community who needs it. New blood drive sponsors are always needed to help replenish the blood supply.

The American Red Cross Penn-Jersey Region serves patients in 125 New Jersey and Pennsylvania hospitals. Every 48 hours, these hospitals request more than 2,000 blood products to treat their patients.

Donna understands the importance of blood donation. She is thankful for the thousands of donors, most of which she'll never meet, whose gift of blood has kept her sons alive.

Donating blood could mean the difference between life and death for as many as three people. Your time and donation really do count. And many thousands of people, like the McCaughey family are counting on people to donate blood.

"Blood donors are heroes to families like ours," says Donna. "Thank you blood donors, for helping my twin babies grow into little boys."

Every Minute of Every Day

Every minute of every day, someone needs blood. The need for blood is increasing, and it is only with your help that critically ill hospital patients can receive the lifesaving blood they need.

Donated Blood Helps Real People

Many types of people can need blood transfusions to live. Trauma victims, surgery patients, individuals living with Sickle Cell Disease, cancer patients and premature infants can all need blood.

One Donation, Many Lives

When you donate blood, your gift is tested and then separated into components --- red cells, platelets, and plasma. Each component meets a different and very important medical need. Every donation can help as many as three people.

Please Help.

Giving blood is safe, it's easy and it saves lives. There is no substitute for your blood donation and you are a hero each time you donate blood.

Please give blood, the gift of life.



Together, we can save a life

1-800-GIVE LIFE
www.pleasegiveblood.org