

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 17, 2008



Florida Blood Services Rolls Out First Fully Automated Bloodmobile

Donors now able to give platelets, plasma and red blood cells on bloodmobile.

(St. Petersburg, FL: 06/17/08) Florida Blood Services (FBS), Tampa Bay's not-for-profit, 501-(c)-3 provider of blood and blood services, is launching a fully automated bloodmobile that will allow donors to give specific blood components, such as platelets, plasma and red cells, to best meet patient needs. The first donations on this new state of the art mobile unit, equipped with the Trima Automated Blood Collection System, will be held in front of the FBS Corporate Headquarters on Tuesday, June 24 at 10 am, with a dedication ceremony at 11 am. FBS Corporate offices are located at 10100 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. St. North in St. Petersburg, Florida.

"Over a dozen donors are already scheduled to share their "Gift of Life" in this special way on this inaugural day," said Rhea Urban, FBS Automated Collection Coordinator. "Clearwater Councilman George Cretekos will lead the way by reaching his 36 gallon donation milestone. In addition, Al Whitney, a 70 year old retired factory worker from Avon Lake, Ohio is flying in to participate. Al has given over 80 gallons of blood and platelets in his lifetime and has a goal of donating platelets in all 50 states in his "Platelets Across America" campaign," said Urban.

Patients who have received multiple platelet donations will also be in attendance to surprise and thank these donors for their special gifts. "Donors take the time to give others a lifetime because they know the need is real," said Dan Eberts, FBS Corporate Communications Manager. "We are inviting some patients to this historic event to add that human connection," said Eberts.

"As stewards of our community's blood supply, Florida Blood Services' goal is to assure that each patient has the right component of the right blood type, in the right quantity, at the right time and in the right place," said JB Gaskins, FBS Vice President of Donor Systems. "Most of our donors visit bloodmobiles which until now has limited them to only donating whole blood or red blood cells. To give platelets or plasma exclusively they have had to travel to a fixed site donor center. As gas prices continue to rise, this new bloodmobile will provide more convenience to donors, while giving us the ability to ask those who qualify, based on their blood type and other criteria, to give whatever blood component is most needed by patients," said Gaskins.

Specific blood components are used to treat seriously ill patients, such as those undergoing chemotherapy, organ and bone marrow transplantation, surgery and traumas, as well as infants in area neonatal intensive care units. Each blood component has unique medicinal properties that are needed in the treatment of various patients. Since these needs change daily, this technology will allow FBS to better maintain inventories of what is needed most.

Since its inception on April 22, 1942, Florida Blood Services has been an industry leader in the blood testing and processing industry. Florida Blood Services was the first blood center in the country to perform bacterial contamination testing for platelets. In the field of transfusion medicine, Florida Blood Services is an innovator in compatibility testing. At six Compatibility Testing labs, sophisticated computer software allows Florida Blood Services to match 95% of patients' blood samples against donations without conventional serologic testing. This electronic matching procedure was approved by the FDA and recognized by the American Association of Blood Banks as a safe method of providing blood for patients in less time than traditional compatibility testing. It also provides for significant savings and more efficient use of resources.

FBS provides for the blood needs of patients at 36 hospitals in Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco and Pinellas Counties, through the generosity of volunteer blood donors. Over 750 donations are required daily, due to the high quality of medical care in Tampa Bay that serves the most critically ill patients throughout west central Florida.

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