

# Our Community



## Volunteering your vein

Giving blood helps people throughout our communities

(Aug. 28, 2002) Sooner or later, just about everyone needs blood. Often that time comes when you least expect it – because of a car accident or emergency surgery.

We all count on blood being available when we need it. Yet, according to the American Red Cross, less than 5 percent of healthy, eligible donors give blood each year.

### Details below

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The No. 1 reason people don't give blood is because they have never been asked.

Will you give blood?

Your donation could save a friend, a relative, a neighbor, a baby or yourself.

#### Our commitment to community needs

Highmark works with the blood banks in the Central and Western regions to help meet the donation needs of our communities.

About 1,800 pints of blood are collected each year from Highmark employees in Central Pennsylvania, and another 1,200 pints are donated by Western Pennsylvania employees.

Despite the large number of contributions, communities across the state are facing critically low blood supplies.

In the Central Region, we're falling short of our goal this year. To achieve our goal, we need to fill every spot on the Bloodmobile for the remainder of the year, and we need at least 75 people to donate in Highmark's name at their local blood bank or a hospital.

In Western Pennsylvania, Highmark currently ranks 14<sup>th</sup> among the region's corporate contributors of blood, falling two slots from the No. 12 position it held at year-end 2001. And with the community's increasing need for blood, we need as many employees as possible to sign-up for October's three-day blood drive event.

The blood banks usually see a decline in supply during the summer and around holidays because people are on vacation and traveling.

There is also a greater need for blood during those same times for the same reasons. People also tend to have elective surgeries in the summer.

But despite excuses and company goals, the community needs your help now.

Will you give blood?

#### What it's like to give

Myths and stories may deter us from donating, but giving blood is not bad and it only takes 30 to 45 minutes.

Here's what happens:

- You fill out a small questionnaire (5 minutes)
- They give you a "mini-physical" (15 minutes)
- A blood sample is taken from your finger for an iron test (30 seconds)
- If you pass those, you go on to the donation
- The nurse inserts a needle into a vein in your arm (2 seconds)
- Your blood is transferred into a bag (5–10 minutes)
- They give you juice or a snack and time to relax (5-10 minutes)
- You're done.

The staff always uses new, sterile needles, gloves, and other items so there is virtually no chance that any disease could be transmitted.

Here's what you get in return:

- The satisfaction of knowing that you have helped saved up to four lives
- A free "mini-physical"
- A card indicating your blood type upon request
- A free cholesterol reading (only at some hospital-based blood banks)

Will you give blood?

#### How to sign up

##### Center Street and Senate Plaza

Contact Jill Briggs, RN, Occupational Health, (717) 763-6630

##### Camp Hill Corporate Centers

Contact Caroline Stoner, Occupational Health, (717) 975-3022

##### HealthPLACE in Fifth Avenue Place

Contact Kevin Nauer, RN, (412) 544-7392

To donate in Highmark's name at your local hospital's blood bank

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To ensure an appropriate outcome at your local hospital or clinic, call the hospital to schedule an appointment.

For more information contact [Caroline Stoner](#), Occupational Health, (717) 975-3022, or [Kevin Nauer, RN](#), in Fifth Avenue Place, (412) 544-7392.

## Live Longer Better



### 96 pints and counting

Greg Osman, dedicated blood donor, nears a milestone

Greg Osman, Staff Services Claims Operations, has a healthy competitive spirit. You might say it's in his blood.

About 30 years ago, he and his two brothers began a competition to see who could give the most blood. Greg is leading the competition with 96 pints so far and next year he will have 100 pints to his credit.

Greg said he gives blood because "the cookies are good, you get colorful bandages, and it's easy."

He knows giving blood is a good thing to do and it helps people at Highmark and in our communities, but his motivation comes from trying to keep up with and eventually surpass other top donors.

Greg also appreciates how Highmark makes it easy for us to help others by participating with various blood bank efforts.

In the Central and Western regions, the blood banks come to us throughout the year for our convenience.

See the related Community Spirit story about how you can contribute blood to a blood bank through a blood drive or through your local hospital.

For more information contact [Caroline Stoner](#), Occupational Health, (717) 975-3032, or [Kevin Nauer, RN](#), HealthPLACE in Fifth Avenue Place, (412) 544-7392.

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## Live Longer Better



Trevis Becker, Unix System Administrator with ISG

### Electronic communications makes working from home easy, fast

**Connected employees do their jobs easier and more efficiently**

(August 2002) "I live electronically. From my home office an hour away from Pennsylvania Blue Shield, electronic communications is my connection to the company," says Trevis Becker, Unix System Administrator with ISG.

He's one of a few employees demonstrating the success of Highmark's strategic direction to take full advantage of the power of electronic communications.

#### Details below

- [Communicate with the boss and co-workers](#)
- [Faster service and reduced costs](#)
- [Find needed information on Highwire](#)

Electronic communications has become the way through which most companies conduct business. For Highmark, this means greater use of the Web (both intranet and Internet) and e-mail to obtain and share information.

With electronic hookups, his laptop and a cell phone, Trevis is thoroughly connected.

"With many forms of electronic communications, I can stay in touch with everyone I need to and get my work done just as I would in my cubicle at the office," says Trevis.

Trevis is responsible for maintaining the domain name servers, firewall security, any electronic mail (other than Lotus Notes) coming into or leaving the company and anything that goes out to the Internet.

Trevis has worked at Highmark for more than eight years, and has worked full-time from his home for about four years. However, he tries to visit his Camp Hill office at least two days a week.

#### Communicate with the boss and co-workers

Electronic communications provides Trevis with different ways to communicate with his boss and co-workers.

"My boss is located in Pittsburgh, so we've always had an electronic work relationship. We communicate through Lotus Notes or over the phone. We also have a video conference meeting every week."

"My co-workers and I stay in touch mostly through a program called [Sametime](#) [PDF]. It's great—you get on-the-spot responses, which is really helpful when you're working on projects that need immediate attention," Trevis says.

Sametime is like ICQ or AOL Instant Messenger. It is a secure text-messaging program that is like real-time e-mail. It supports communications to users nearby and around the world.

"The use of Sametime has really been an asset to getting work done. When I have a question, or a problem arises with an assignment, I can get answers in an instant," he said.

#### Faster service and reduced costs

In addition to computers for electronic communications, the telephone has become increasingly useful for Trevis' job. And Highmark is testing ways to combine the two resources.

"We are now in the process of experimenting with phone calls over the Web. It is very cool and it is a way for Highmark to cut long-distance phone call costs," Trevis said.

The types of network connections are also changing, making it faster for Trevis to send and receive information pertinent to getting his work done.

"I now have a DSL line that makes network connections incredibly fast. When I first started working from home, I had a dial-up connection. Communications seemed to move at a snail's pace compared to today," he said.

#### Find needed information on Highwire

Although Trevis' workload does not leave much room for surfing Highwire, he acknowledges that Highwire is a great source for getting information quickly.

"I don't really have time to go to Highwire every day, but the information there is useful and I know if I need to find something about the company, it's a good place to look," says Trevis.

"I primarily use Highwire to find out more about my family's and my own health benefits. With two boys at home, you need to be aware of your benefits," Trevis says with a chuckle.

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## Live Longer Better



### Galford makes healing possible

Rena Galford draws on personal experience to help grieving children

Life's experiences prepare us for many things. Sometimes we don't know how until years later.

#### Details below

- [Planning activities to help children](#)
- [The Caring Place is a safe place](#)

Rena Galford, volunteers at The Caring Place in Erie, where children make quilt squares (in the background) to honor loved ones who died.

Rena Galford, a representative in the Erie service center, knows that her childhood experience has prepared her to help children deal with grief.

She recalls the loss of her grandmother and how she experienced it, and that helps her understand what grieving children go through.

"Most people think children grieve for a few weeks and then get on with life, but it can be much more traumatic," Rena said. "The loss of a loved one can affect them in so many ways."

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Rena was 9 years old when her grandmother died after a heart attack that left her in a coma for several months. She was not allowed to see her grandmother at the hospital, and that contributed to her grief. "I felt guilty that I didn't say goodbye, or if I would have visited her in the hospital I would have been able to awaken her from the coma," she said.



Rena plans arts and crafts and other activities to help children deal with a loss.

When she joined Highmark in July 2000, Rena decided to put her experience and perspective to good use. She began volunteering at the Erie Caring Place as a facilitator for a peer support group.

She has seen children's responses to grief take many forms, from anger and aggression to depression.

Often, children have nowhere to turn for help, she says. Their friends — and often the adults in their life — don't know how to deal with their grief and difficulties. Through The Caring Place, Rena offers help.

#### Planning activities to help children

The Caring Place program helps children understand their loss and learn that what they are going through is normal.

Working with children age 9 through 12, Rena plans activities designed to help children deal with their loss. By sharing their feelings, memories and experiences with a group of their peers, the children recognize they are not alone in their grief. They begin the healing process.

The activities include:

- Role-playing situations that children may experience in school — some children have been teased or excluded because they have lost a mother, father or sibling
- Arts and crafts to form pictures of the children's grief or feelings centering around the loss of a loved one
- Making quilt squares honoring the person who has died
- Journal writing to put thought into words and on paper
- Making memory boxes (in which cherished items are kept).

The groups meet biweekly for 10-week periods at The Caring Place in Erie to talk and engage in activities that offer encouragement and support.

"Everyone experiences death at some point," Rena said. "Children need to know that hope and healing are possible."

Through The Caring Place, the children experience the help they need. They also give something back.

"The children I have worked with through The Caring Place have given me so much," Rena said. "I truly feel honored that they allow me to listen to their stories. They have taught me a tremendous amount about the importance one single life can make as well as the value of enjoying every single moment each of us are given and how important those around us are."

#### The Caring Place is a safe place

The Caring Place has locations in Pittsburgh and Erie. It is dedicated to children, adolescents and their families who have lost a loved one. It is a safe place where children and their families can:

- Know they are not alone in their grief

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- Share their feelings, memories and experiences in an atmosphere of nonjudgmental acceptance
- See that what they are going through is normal
- Know that hope and healing are possible.

One child in 20 will have a parent die before he or she graduates from high school.

"We couldn't do the work we do at The Caring Place without our volunteers," said [Sheena Shannon](#), director of volunteer services at The Caring Place in Pittsburgh. "The volunteers, people from all different backgrounds, become a part of the community for these families, and they help us to serve a very diverse group of children and adults. The volunteers are the heart of [The Caring Place](#)."

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For more information about volunteering at The Caring Place contact [Andra Lauriar](#), (888) 224-4673 in Pittsburgh or (866) 212-4673 in Erie.