

Health Matters

Combat Sickle Cell Disease by Filling the Missing Types

(NAPSA)—“Silent heroes.” That’s how Blaze Eppinger, who has had sickle cell disease since birth, describes people who donate blood—and you could be among them.

Sickle cell is a lifetime battle and the odds of leading a healthy life depend in part on whether hospitals have adequate inventories of the right blood types.

As a child, Eppinger would get blood transfusions at least monthly. Today, at 28, he still needs nine or 10 transfusions a year—but it’s not always possible.



Blaze Eppinger is a sickle cell patient with a passion for sickle cell advocacy and motivating new and diverse blood donors to give.

“When blood is not available for me, I have to stay in the hospital longer, basically fighting a sickle cell crisis,” which, he explained, is very painful.

“When I receive the blood donations that I need and my numbers go up, I feel like I’m back to myself,” Eppinger added. “I don’t feel the pain. I don’t feel drained. It’s like putting gas in the car or batteries in your remote. I’m energized!”

The American Red Cross Missing Types Campaign was established to help people like Blaze.

As for the Red Cross and its volunteer blood donors, Eppinger said, “They give life more than they know. It’s just an hour of their time, but that helps save lives. If it weren’t for generous blood donors, I wouldn’t be alive.”



To encourage new and current blood donors to donate blood every 56 days or as often as they can, Eppinger volunteers at the Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia and Red Cross blood drives.

“To my fellow millennials,” he said, “your blood donation can be what’s needed to save a sickle cell patient. Having blood available for everyone who needs it is so important for people like me who fight sickle cell.”

Are you the missing type?

Schedule your next blood donation today by using the Blood Donor App, by visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).