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Blood Assurance holds luncheon, discusses donations

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Blood Assurance held its Cartersville Community Blood Council Luncheon at the Clarence Brown Conference Center on Thursday. The luncheon was held to address a number of topics about blood donation in the Bartow County area, including what the current needs are and where Cartersville Medical Center's supply of blood comes from.

Currently, all of CMC's blood and blood products are provided by Chattanooga-based Blood Assurance, which, according to its website, is a nonprofit, full-service regional blood center serving 51 counties and more than 70 health care facilities in Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina and Virginia. They have 15 locations and 13 bloodmobiles to collect donations all around the Southeast.

CMC Director of Marketing and Public Relations Ginger Tyra was



BRANDON DAVIS/The Daily Tribune News Blood Assurance Bartow County Area Donor Recruiter Jennifer Robinson, left, stands with Rome Area Donor Recruiter Brian Cross, center, and Executive Director of Community Relations Jay Baumgardner beside a display at the first Cartersville Community Blood Council Luncheon hosted at the Clarence Brown Conference Center on Thursday.

present to give a rundown of some of the numbers on blood in Bartow. “So far in 2015, Bartow County has collected about 600 donations and has used approximately 450 blood products,” she noted.

Though donations are coming in all the time, Tyra said the amount of people who can actually donate is surprisingly low. She asked members of the audience to guess what percentage of the population were able to donate their blood.

“Eighty percent,” guessed someone toward the back of the room. Many may consider this a reasonable assumption, but the number is not quite so high. According to Tyra, only 60 percent of people are actually able to donate. Of that 60 percent, only 5 percent decide to give their blood. The average donor gives blood 1 1/2 times every year, though each donor is allowed to do so once every 56 days. Charlie Callari, vice president of marketing and donor recruitment for Blood Assurance, said certain times during the year, specifically the summer and winter months, are particularly difficult for maintaining an

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appropriate supply of blood. This can be attributed to the roughly 20 to 25 percent of donations that come from schools. Any time there is a break in school, Blood Assurance must create ways to keep donations up.

“It’s a pretty big percentage, so when they’re out of school for the summer or the holidays, we need to come up with some other creative solutions to draw some blood,” Callari pointed out. “So that’s why we’ve started some other programs throughout the year. We just started something called ‘Battle of the Badges,’ where (we have) police department against police department for different counties. Or we could go fire department versus police department or something like that. But that’s just one example.”

Because it is such a challenge to keep the blood supply up at all times, eligible donors are encouraged to donate as often as possible.

“Giving blood and getting blood is safe, with 13 tests being run on each pint, [including] three HIV tests,” said Tyra, noting that the process for identifying healthy blood is as good as it has ever been. Additionally, the actual blood-giving portion of a donation only lasts five to eight minutes.

For those still hesitant about making a donation, Bartow County area Donor Recruiter Jennifer Robinson said there is nothing to fear. She makes sure that donors are properly informed about the process.

“The easiest thing is to discern why [people are hesitant]. Usually it’s ‘I’m scared of needles’ or it’s just lack of education. So I just try to talk it through with them.”

For more information about Blood Assurance, including how and where to donate, visit bloodassurance.org.

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