

KINS Community Comment

This is Tom Schallert with a Community Comment.

After more than 28 years as CEO at Northern California Community Blood Bank and more than 38 years working in blood banking, I retired on Friday, August 17.

When I joined the blood center in 1990, we had 13 employees and collected about 5,000 Blood Donations. I came here from a blood center that collected over 400,000 Blood Donations with more than 1,000 employees. Currently, there are over 50 staff working at our blood bank.

Budgets were different, \$600,000 in 1990 and now over \$5,000,000 compared to the \$55 Million Budget I managed in Los Angeles.

The job change was dramatic but my responsibility was the same. I had to work with staff, board and volunteers to:

Provide an adequate supply of blood and related blood products to the patients and hospitals we serve.

Provide a safe blood supply by following the regulations and requirements that ensure the blood supply is safe.

Do the first and second in a fiscally sound manner that ensured the financial stability of blood center.

We have met local blood service needs because we have worked with our community and have one of the highest percentages nationwide of our local population giving blood. As those of you who are blood donors know, our staff is quite efficient in reminding donors when they are eligible to give, especially those of you who are O Negative.

Staff are friendly and skilled at what they do. They care about the donor and the patient who will receive that donor's blood. They realize that in all areas of work, we are merely the conduit between donor and patient. I want to thank all of the thousands of donors who have donated over the last 28 years. Donors have been my inspiration for decades.

With support from our Board of Directors, blood bank staff have been involved in many local community events, Bowl for Kids Sake, United Way, Food for People, CASA, American Cancer Society, Rotary, Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce as well as sitting on many Boards throughout our community.

Our Board also supports participation in blood banking nationally so we are part of many trade and education associations and I had the privilege to be President of California Blood Bank Society, America's Blood Centers, and Blood Centers of California.

(We are also members of Blood Centers of America, American Association of Blood Banks, Blood Innovations and the Alliance of Blood Operators all of which provide service, knowledge and sharing for our staff.)

We have provided the latest technology to ensure safety and were one of the first to have wireless and paperless donor registration and automated blood component processing.

To make it more convenient for donors, we run three bloodmobiles from Garberville, to Willow Creek and Hoopa and all the way to Crescent City. We are one of the few blood centers that use Automated Blood Collection devices on our bloodmobile so we can collect just the blood product we need.

The Board has encouraged staff to be involved internationally. We have been to Nigeria for assessments and training trainers to improve their blood banking systems. Nigerians have been to our blood center for training. We have trained in volunteer donor recruitment in Ukraine and trained blood collection staff in Krygystan. We wrote training programs that are used in several other countries.

We continue to work with several Non Government Organizations to get equipment and supplies to developing countries and we are working with these groups on our 3rd donated Bloodmobile to Nigeria. Bloodmobile 3 is on a ship now and should arrive in Nigeria in mid September.

I am proud of the fact we have such a giving community. Our donors know it is the blood on the shelf at the time of the accident, surgery, disaster etc. that saves lives.

I am proud we have been able to accomplish so much even though we are one of the smallest blood centers in the USA.

I am proud of what we have done and accomplished internationally and I will continue working with Rotary Club of Eureka, Safe Blood Africa and the other NGOs to help ensure volunteer blood is available for patients in developing countries.

One of our exciting projects you will hear more about soon is our development of the very first Electric, Battery Powered, Eco Friendly Bloodmobile. We are in final design and hope to be operational by spring, 2019.

The EV Bloodmobile will be costly and we are beginning to seek funds to help us pay for it. So when asked, I hope you will continue to give blood and I hope businesses, foundations and individuals will help us pay for this fabulous Bloodmobile.

In closing, I want to say as Shakespeare did, "Evermore Thanks" to all of you. I have appreciated the opportunity and I hope that you will support the new CEO, Kate Witthaus.