

Rep. Bilirakis to Donate Blood During Blood Donor Awareness Month

PALM HARBOR, Fla. (3 Jan.) -- In an effort to raise awareness during Blood Donor Awareness Month, U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis will donate blood at 10 a.m. on Friday, January 4, 2008, at the Florida Blood Services' (FBS) Donor Center located in Hudson at 7214 State Road 52 (just east of U.S. 19).

Throughout the month of January blood transfusion recipients along with their family and friends across the country recognize and thank blood donors through the annual celebration of National Blood Donor Month.

"Our nation's blood supply is in daily need of our support. There is no other thing you can do so simply and quickly to provide so much help and life to others in desperate need of blood," said Congressman Bilirakis. "It takes just a few moments out of your day to donate blood, and no other time of the year is more important than during these winter months when supplies are lower. I am pleased to support this effort to raise awareness about the need for blood donations, and encourage everyone who can give, to consider donating their blood to help others."

"Here in Tampa Bay our population grows daily and with the arrival of our winter visitors, the blood needs of our community are greater than at any other time of the year," said J.B. Gaskins, FBS Vice President of Donor Systems. "Blood usage by local patients often outpaces donations at this time of year and we are pleased that Congressman Bilirakis recognizes this and wants to share his gift of life with others," said Gaskins.

Currently, the blood inventory at Florida Blood Services is below a 2 day reserve for blood types O, A and B negative blood.

Each year, more than 4.5 million patients need blood transfusions in the U.S. According to a recent study by W. Riley (et al) published in the July 2007 issue of Transfusion, only 37 percent of the population is eligible to give blood. However, less than 10 percent of the eligible population gives annually. It is only through the commitment of regular blood donors that blood centers across the nation can maintain a safe and sufficient blood supply that we can all rely upon when we need it most.

"If it weren't for the generosity of millions of American blood donors, people with disorders such as Thalassemia and Sickle Cell would not live a productive life," states Donald Doddridge, Florida Blood Services CEO and current President of America's Blood Centers (ABC). "Many more are alive today because there was blood on the shelf when they needed it after an accident or emergency surgical procedure. ABC would like to thank those who have continued to support the cause, and ask those who have not previously donated, to start a new habit in 2008: giving the gift of life by becoming a regular blood donor."

To be eligible to donate blood you must be healthy, 16 years of age or older and weigh at least 110 pounds. For more information about becoming a blood donor or to find a donation location call 1-800-68-BLOOD (25663) or log on to www.fbsblood.org.

About America's Blood Centers

Founded in 1962, America's Blood Centers is North America's largest network of community-based blood programs. Recognized by the U.S. Congress for its critical work in patient care and disaster preparedness and response, the federation of 77 blood centers together operates more than 600 collection sites in 45 U.S. states and Canada, providing half of the U.S., and all of the Canadian volunteer donor blood supply.

About Florida Blood Services

Florida Blood Services provides for the blood needs of patients at 38 hospitals in Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco and Pinellas counties through the participation 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.