

About World Blood Donor Day 2006

Every second of every day, someone in the world needs a blood transfusion to survive. World Blood Donor Day is celebrated annually on 14 June as a global celebration of the Gift of Blood given by voluntary, unpaid donors to save the lives of those in need. The day aims to raise awareness of the need for safe blood, to thank and honour those who donate blood and to encourage current and potential donors to donate regularly on a voluntary unpaid basis.

Unanimous global support

At the World Health Assembly in May 2005, health ministers from around the world made a unanimous declaration of support for voluntary unpaid blood donation. They passed resolution WHA58.13 designating World Blood Donor Day as an annual event to be held on 14 June. This date was chosen to honour Nobel Prize winner Dr Karl Landsteiner, who developed the system of classifying blood groups and who was born on 14 June 1868.

World Blood Donor Day celebrations are sponsored by four international organizations working for the promotion of voluntary unpaid blood donation and the provision of safe blood: the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations and the International Society of Blood Transfusion. Between them, they represent 192 WHO Member States, 181 national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 50 national voluntary blood donor organizations and thousands of blood transfusion specialists throughout the world.

2006: Focus on commitment

Building on the success of the first two World Blood Donor Days in 2004 and 2005, which focused on individual blood donors, the focus of World Blood Donor Day 2006 is commitment:

- Commitment from healthy individuals to become regular voluntary unpaid blood donors;
- Commitment from existing voluntary unpaid donors to continue to donate regularly.

The need for commitment extends beyond blood donors to all partners working towards universal access to safe blood.

Commitment is needed from both governments and blood transfusion services to promote voluntary unpaid blood donation and phase out paid donation and family replacement donation (when people are asked to donate blood if it is needed for a relative or friend): patients who receive blood from voluntary unpaid blood donors have been shown to have the lowest risk of acquiring infections such as HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C or Chagas disease through transfusion.

Commitment is also needed from blood transfusion services and partner organizations to provide the highest standards of care at every stage of the transfusion process—from the collection of blood from the donor to its transfusion to the patient—in order to maintain donor loyalty and willingness to donate blood regularly.

Strength in numbers

Each year, in a wave of global solidarity, organizations and community groups around the world hold a rich variety of events on and around World Blood Donor Day to complement their ongoing activities. As groups active in voluntary blood donation often join forces on the Day to make their messages reach far and wide to achieve maximum impact, these events are often a catalyst for long-term collaboration and communication with communities and potential blood donors. It is expected that World Blood Donor Day 2006 will set a new record for participating countries and organizations.

A global event is also held on 14 June each year to provide a focus for an international media campaign on World Blood Donor Day; the 2006 event will be held in Bangkok, hosted by the Thai Red Cross Society National Blood Center. More details of this event, together with information about planned national events, will be posted on the World Blood Donor Day website (<http://www.wbdd.org>) and WHO's World Blood Donor Day web page (<http://www.who.int/worldblooddonorday>).

For more information

For more information on World Blood Donor Day and resources including downloadable logos, translated slogans, and all of the material included in this campaign kit, please visit the World Blood Donor Day website and WHO's World Blood Donor Day web page.