



“Spotlight on a NICU Graduate: A Graduate’s View of Blood”

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Rob, an accident victim needs 4-100 units of blood; Nick a heart transplant patient needs 4-6 units; Chas a cancer patient survives with 2-6 units and 6-8 units of platelets daily for 2-4 weeks; Ashley and Breana, sickle cell patients live with 10-15 units periodically to successfully treat severe complications; Madison, a premature baby requires up to 4 units of blood to survive while in intensive care.

These may seem far-fetched, but closer to home, Madison and Janelle, premature babies require up to 4 units while hospitalized.

The persons listed above are all beneficiaries of blood donations. (www.givelife2.org)

Even more staggering are the following facts:

- 4.5 million Americans would die each year without blood transfusions.
- 60% of the U.S. population is eligible to donate only 5% do annually.
- Just one pint of donated blood can save as many as three lives.
- Every 3 seconds someone needs blood.
- For less than 10 minutes of your time, you can make a difference.
- There is no substitute for human blood.

The following speech was delivered at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in 2001 for the 50th Anniversary of the Blood Bank.

Good Evening,

My name is Janelle Small and I am here tonight to thank you.

When my mother first asked me if I would speak on behalf of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, for donors I said, "Sure, no problem!" I imagined speaking in front of an audience to encourage and promote donations of a financial type to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, since monetary donations to Cedars-Sinai and to the NICU are invaluable.

However, it was not until I spoke with Ms. Bauer from the Blood Donor Facility that I realized that she wanted me to discuss the importance of donating blood and how blood transfusions saved my life almost 20 years ago. When I realized this I was very touched because the value of blood and scarcity of blood far exceeds monetary value. In fact, blood is priceless, for it gives life. And no monetary value can be placed on anyone's life.

Right now as I stand before you, I am a healthy 20 year-old about to embark on my final year at UC Berkeley, well my year and a half (everyone is on the 4 1/2-5 year plan up there)! I have dreams of being an international lawyer and somehow also focusing on international development. But if you met me exactly 20 years and 7 months ago you would've ooh and ahed at my incredibly cute and incredibly tiny body, for I was 2 lbs., 2 oz and holding fast to my dreams and fighting for my life.

I was born on Nov. 5th 1980, and after my birth I was immediately sent to the NICU. This would be my new home for the next month and a half, where I received blood from the day I was born up until the day I left the NICU on Dec. 25th. I am forever grateful for the constant love and encouragement from my parents, family and friends and the gifted and caring doctors and nurses of the NICU. But with all the love and encouragement, it was the charity of the anonymous blood donors that allowed me to fight for my life, day after day, and allowed me to dream.

Since I can't really track down those donors, I would like to thank you all since you share the same wonderful qualities as the anonymous donors who saved my life. I don't really think you all realize that there is a part of you in everyone you have touched, and so in the absence of my donors I wish to thank you from the bottom of my heart. I mean, let's face it; it takes a special person with a sincere love for humanity to donate blood. You are special indeed and I am here today to tell you that and to thank you.

You have chosen to give to humanity on this level. Can you imagine, if we all chose our areas of strength and served, how much better this world would be? Filled with persons doing selfless acts and random acts of kindness. Now, this is where the ripple effect comes in. Your kindness gave me life. My service in hosting blood drives, and promoting them by telling my story has, in a small way, saved lives too! And continuing to spread the message to friends and family encourages more and more donating and saves more and more lives.

So in short, well not really - but what I am trying to say is "thank you. " And I'm not only thanking you for your unsung heroism, acts of kindness and unconditional love, but to ask you to please keep on doing it. Seconds of discomfort can yield 60+ years of life and allow us, the recipients, to dream. You allow us to dream. So my personal challenge to myself and to all the recipients who have received and continue to receive blood and support from donors like you is to hold fast to your dreams. And as Langston Hughes wrote:

*Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.*

*Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.*

Your givingness humbles me. Your spirit amazes me. As I flipped through the donor list for blood and platelets I was awestruck by those who donated 1 gallon of blood and as I continued to flip through to 15 gallons I was in tears as I then imagined the impact you have all made, and the dreamers you have let dream simply through your unselfish acts of humility and kindness.

While we are now in 2004, and it has been about three years since my delivery of this speech - my message is still the same. Not only does my thank you and desperate plea apply to the 110 individuals that were in the room that night, but now I extend this plea to the community. To you, your family and your friends.

The urgency and need for blood, plasma and platelets is even greater than before. If we all do our part and share the responsibility of donating blood and encouraging others to do the same we can save lives. With less than an hour of your time, we can save the Robs, the Nicks, the Chases, the Ashleys and Breanas and the Madisons and Janelles and many more. Whoever the individual, the gift of life is immeasurable. And your unsung heroism and acts of kindness will yield the greatest reward - the gift of life.