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BLOOD ASSURANCE ENCOURAGES COMMUNITY TO “STEP UP TO THE PLATELETS” WITH NEW INITIATIVE

Blood Assurance Launches Initiative to Educate and Encourage New Platelet Donors

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (May 5, 2017) — Today, Blood Assurance announced the launch of a new regional initiative, “Step Up To The Platelets,” in efforts to encourage platelet donations for local cancer and trauma patients in need. For hundreds of local patients they are essential to surviving and fighting cancer, chronic diseases and traumatic injuries. Blood Assurance is making strides to encourage more platelet donors by partnering with local businesses and offering special incentives during the month of May and throughout the year.

“Every 30 seconds someone in the U.S. needs platelets to help fight cancer, treat a chronic disease or a traumatic injury,” said Rick Youngblood, Blood Assurance president and CEO. “And because platelets must be used within five days of donation, new donors are constantly in need. The patients receiving platelet transfusions are cancer and trauma patients who often require them on a frequent basis and for many, they are a lifeline.”

During a platelet donation, blood is taken from one arm and channeled through a sterile, disposable kit and placed in a special machine. The machine separates the blood into different components, the platelets are taken out, and the rest of the blood is returned to the donor. More platelets are able to be collected this way than with whole blood donation. The collected platelets have a short shelf life and can only be stored for five days before use. Each year, more than one million platelet transfusions are given to patients in need.

“Platelets are in constant demand by hospitals to help give cancer patients the strength they need to keep fighting and help patients survive serious injuries and major surgeries,” said Dr. Jennifer Keates-Baleeiro, MD, MA, pediatric specialist at Children’s Hospital at Erlanger. “The platelets you donate may help save a cancer patient just a few days following your donation, as patients battling cancer often lack platelets due to the cancer or as a side effect of treatment. Seeing platelets save the lives of my patients every day I can tell you first hand that they are constantly in need. I urge you to donate and help those in your community, young and old, get the platelets that are essential for their recovery.”
Platelet donations can be repeated every seven days, up to 24 times per year. During May, all first-time platelet donors will receive a $10 Visa gift card as a special thank you gift from Blood Assurance. Blood Assurance also encourages you to donate with a friend and become, “platelet pals.” If existing donors bring a new donor to donate platelets with them during May, both “platelet pals” will receive a $10 Visa gift card as a thank you gift.

To schedule an appointment to donate platelets at any Blood Assurance center, text ‘STEP’ to 444999, or call 800-962-0628.

To be eligible to donate, you must be at least 18 years old (17 and 16 years old with parental consent), weigh 110 pounds or more and be in good health. Donors are asked to drink plenty of fluids - avoiding caffeine - and eat a meal that is rich in iron prior to donating. For more information about Blood Assurance, visit www.BloodAssurance.org.

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**About Blood Assurance**

Blood Assurance is a non-profit, full-service regional blood center serving 51 counties and more than 75 health care facilities in Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina and Virginia. Over 540 volunteer blood donors are needed every day in order to adequately supply these hospitals. Founded in 1972 as a joint effort of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Medical Society, the Chattanooga Area Hospital Council, and the Chattanooga Jaycees, the mission of Blood Assurance is to provide a safe and adequate supply of blood and blood components to every area patient in need. Blood Assurance is based in Chattanooga, Tennessee.