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Blood ? a family portrait

Many Canadian families rely on blood donors to help loved ones recover from life-threatening conditions. National Blood Donor Week (June 8?14) is a reminder to all Canadians that by donating blood today, you can help save the lives of countless family members?and your donation is needed now more than ever.

Canadian Blood Services is experiencing a notable decrease in donations heading into the summer months. Although donations traditionally dip heading into June, the national inventory is the lowest it has been in more than five years at this time of year.

?There are 33,000 appointments that need to be filled before the end of June,? says Mark Donnison, Vice-President of Donor Relations. ?Every donation counts.?

Blood is what bonds many families together and in turn, blood donors share their family bond with patients, creating a much larger family portrait across the country. Many blood donors, like Vancouver's Neil Bernstein, were inspired by a family member to start donating. (Click here to learn more: YouTube Video: YouTube.com/watch?v=uB0CtWe4at4). Neil's father, Frank, became a life-long donor at the age of 17 and rarely missed an appointment. Before his passing in 2011, Frank donated 532 times leaving a legacy for his son to continue.

?We really wanted to donate together, but I could never get the time to go with him. When he passed, I said, ?it's my turn',? says Neil Bernstein, blood donor and musician. Now Neil is a regular donor and has made it his life's work to encourage others to give blood. This Canadian musician is launching his own cross-country ?Rock for Blood? tour to encourage others to help save lives.

?My dad never missed an appointment unless he was sick. That commitment still runs deep in the family even though he is gone,? says Neil, ?The feeling you get after you donate is pretty amazing?it just kind of washes over you that you could possibly be saving someone's life.?

Canadian Blood Services invites Canadians from coast to coast to contribute to our family portrait by making blood donation a family tradition. Share family donor stories on social media using #families4blood, and rally loved ones to plan a family reunion at a blood donor clinic this summer.

? Shelburne ? Wednesday, June 18th at Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex ? 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. To book a family or individual blood donor appointment, download the GiveBlood app, visit blood.ca or call 1-888 -2-DONATE (1 888-236-6283) today.