



Jamestown man donates blood for the 300th time; his donations have saved hundreds of lives

For Jim McLoughlin blood donation is simply a way of life. It has been for some 45 years. Recently, Jim, 85, celebrated his 300th donation on his regular twice-a-month visit to the Aquidneck Donor Center in Middletown, where he is an apheresis donor.

“I feel it’s doing good for somebody,” said Jim, explaining why he continues to donate.

His platelet donations, and whole blood donations before, have given hope and life to hundreds of blood recipients and their families. But, perhaps, even more impressive has



been his dedication as a blood drive coordinator at two drives in Jamestown, each of which now runs about three times a year.

Combined, the drives at the Jamestown EMS and American and Veterans of Foreign Wars, have collected some 2,917 pints of blood since Jim became the coordinator in 1987. Since each blood donation has the potential to save three lives, his work alone at the blood drives has given hope and life to nearly 9,000 families, or the equivalent of nearly twice the population of Jamestown itself.

“Jim is an unbelievable example of someone who so understates his contributions, while recognizing the importance of blood donation, demonstrating by example his commitment to saving lives,” said Frank Prosnitz, the Blood Center’s Community Development manager.

Jim recalls that his first donation was sometime pre-1963, when he responded to a plea for donors at a Warwick American Legion Post blood drive. He’s been donating blood ever since.

Until 1995 he was strictly a whole blood donor, which meant he could donate every eight weeks. In 1995 he switched to apheresis, an automated process that takes platelets, while returning other products to the system. You can donate platelets every two weeks.

The only records available for blood donations track the number of donations individuals have made since the opening of the Rhode Island Blood Center in 1979. So while Jim, his wife of 58 years, Thelma, and Blood Center staff celebrated his 300th donation since the Blood Center's founding, Jim's actual number of donations is considerably higher.

This is a remarkable individual, who shuns praise and goes about his day with the energy of someone much younger.

To Thelma what he does is simply "terrific." To Jim, it's just "ordinary." Thelma has also been a blood donor for years, eventually stopping because of an illness.

On Jamestown, Jim McLoughlin is a familiar figure. He used to drive ambulance in Jamestown, but now services the vehicles at the station; he delivers meals on wheels; works as a gate attendant at Fort Getty in Jamestown during the summer; and is active in the Arnold Zweir Post 22 American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9447. He also cares for all the flags for the veterans in Jamestown, and coordinates the two Jamestown blood drives.

Does he ever think about the lives he's saved as a donor? Yes, said Jim, again repeating how he just keeps on donating because it's simply doing some good.

He doesn't understand why more people aren't donating blood.

"It doesn't bother me," he said. "If people would only realize that. When I get out of here (the donor center) I don't feel any different. I don't understand why more people don't donate"

Across the nation, only about 5 percent of eligible donors actually donate, while nearly 40 percent can.

Jim and Thelma are the parents of one son, James, and grandparents to Matthew, 18, and Luke, 5. A World War II and Korean War Veteran, Jim worked in automotive for more than 40 years.

Ask Jim about his life, and as he did five years ago when he approached his 200th donation, he'll give that half grin and suggest it's just a "run of the mill life, that's all. I'm quite astounded I made it so far, stayed so long."

Indeed, there are hundreds, possibly thousands of people that are thankful he has.