

Blood shortage impacts local communities

akhila SWARNA

Along with the typical lecture on blood spatter and blood typing in forensics class, Dawna Barnhart, science teacher, incorporates information about a crucial issue: the national blood shortage.

The American Red Cross announced the country is undergoing one of the worst blood shortages in more than a decade, creating a delay in crucial blood transfusions for patients. The Red Cross provides up to 40 percent of the nation's blood supply, and the shortage has led to blood banks reporting less than a day's supply of some blood types, according to the organization.

"I think my job is just to make my students aware of things that our community needs," Barnhart said. "And so our crisis with blood right now, that's just one of those things."

The current blood crisis stemmed specifically from the pandemic and harsh weather conditions inhibiting transportation to the blood drives. In fact, the rise in COVID-19 cases attributed to a 10 percent decline in the number of individuals donating blood, according to the Red Cross.

Barnhart said since the majority of her students are old enough to donate blood, she wants to inform them of the crisis and encourage blood donation. If students had access to a blood drive at MHS, she said most of her students would donate.

Senior Theresa Santos, secretary of media for the National Honors Society (NHS), said NHS decided to host a blood drive this spring to improve students' access to donation centers.

Santos said the goal of the blood drive is to donate to hospitals and to patients who are in need of blood for transfusions. The blood drive is also a yearly tradition for NHS.

"We decided to do a blood drive because we need to give back to our community," Santos said. "It's a certain way to donate something other than goods."

As the Red Cross National Headquarters Intake Team Member, Michelle Cubero said her work connects thousands of Red Cross volunteers with links to the nearest blood drives to help mitigate the crisis. She offers Donor Ambassador (DA) positions to volunteers who sign up for shifts working blood drives and helps educate the DAs on how to support blood donors.

"Our work helps staff the nations' blood drives to make it possible for people to donate blood to offset

the blood shortage," Cubero said.

Cubero said blood shortages happen from time to time, but the current crisis documents record lows with factors like the COVID-19 pandemic or the area of the country impacting the blood supply.

"Recently we've had tornados, blizzards and other natural disasters where a simple blood transfusion can save a person's life," Cubero said.

Cubero said she encourages individuals to get involved by signing up to volunteer at the American Red Cross, by donating blood by becoming a DA and staffing blood drives, or even assisting the National Scheduling Team by scheduling volunteers for shifts in blood drives.

"It's no longer about us: it's about the emergency itself and we are partnering up and teaming up," Cubero said.

Margaret G'Sell, medical technologist at Mercy Hospital St. Louis, said the current blood crisis is concerning for numerous reasons, especially for patients

needing trauma surgery or patients with acute blood loss.

Because type O blood is the universal donor to all blood types, G'Sell said the blood type is the lowest in supply which is potentially dangerous to babies and individuals needing emergency surgery.

Although Mercy Hospital does not order blood through the Red Cross, the blood shortage has impacted the elective surgery schedule, G'Sell said. Due to the increase in COVID cases, elective surgeries were pushed back. Blood donation was inhibited by the past snow days, but the elective surgeries will require additional blood requests.

In the future, the Red Cross requests the nation to "roll up a sleeve to help ensure people receive the care they need."

Those wishing to donate blood can visit www.redcross.org to find local blood drives.

What are blood types?

Blood types are determined by the presence of antigens, either A or B, and can trigger an immune response with the presence of a foreign antigen. Each blood type contains either A or B antigens with the exception of the O blood type that has neither antigen.

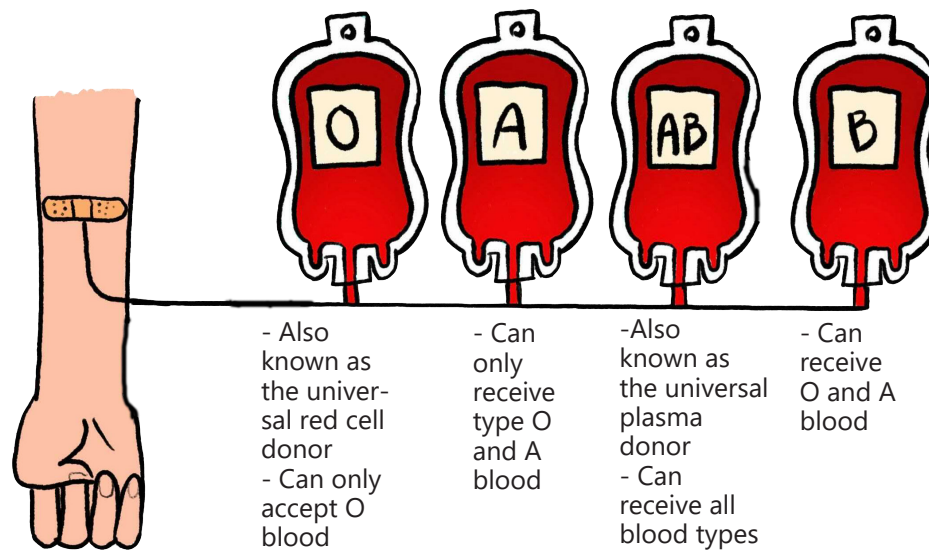


Illustration by Emma Tyulyayev. Infographic by Akhila Swarna

RSD announces Dr. Curtis Cain as new superintendent

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After a year-long search, the RSD Board of Education (BOE) unanimously selected Dr. Curtis Cain as the district's new superintendent effective July 1, 2022.

Dr. Cain currently serves as the superintendent of the Wentzville School District where he has worked since 2013 and will be replacing RSD's interim superintendent, Dr. Tim Ricker.

In a press release, Dr. Cain said he is honored to join RSD and looks forward to building relationships and supporting opportunities for students.

"I plan to spend a great deal of time listening and learning and bringing people together to focus on all students and their growth," Dr. Cain said in the press release. "I'm truly grateful and excited to join the Rockwood family."

Taryn Blevins, junior, said she used to be in the Wentzville School District and has had Dr. Cain as a superintendent in the past.

"The majority [of Wentzville School District] was white so it was a big thing to have an African Ameri-

can superintendent just there," Blevins said. "He was like a face that you knew in the school district, and he really made personal connections with people."

Blevins said Dr. Cain being RSD's first person of color superintendent is a huge step forward for the district.

As part of the Diversity and Equity Committee (DEI), Blevins said they often talk about the lack of African American administration.

"So I think that it is definitely just such a powerful thing that he's superintendent now, but it's also like you have somebody standing with you and for you, and it's pushing for change," Blevins said.

As part of the DEI, Blevins said she hopes Dr. Cain will focus on making RSD more diverse.

"I definitely hope that he looks forward to hiring more or pushing for more African American administration," Blevins said.

Jamie Bayes, BOE president, said Dr. Cain was chosen because of his qualities and experiences.

"He understands the importance of relationships while focusing on student growth and potential,"

Bayes said. "He is a positive and energetic person who brings a great depth of experience leading a large district."

Principal Dr. Steve Hankins said he has known Dr. Cain for seven years as his kids are in the Wentzville School District.

"I think he is a great leader so I think he will be a great addition to RSD," Dr. Hankins said.

Dr. Hankins said Dr. Cain will respond to controversy in the best manner to properly represent RSD.

"He's been a superintendent for the last seven years," Dr. Hankins said. "The last two years of this he's been in a position where he's had similar controversies with different viewpoints and different boards, so he's very experienced with this situation, and I think he's gonna be just fine."

