

Parishioners in the archdiocese donate blood often

Sue Miller is a champion. A plaque proves it on the Wall of Champions at Good Samaritan Hospital, Baltimore, and her hospital ID badge announces it as well. Attached to her badge by a gold pin, the garnered award reads, “Putting you first” with “Champion” scrawled across it.

“I wear it on my ID badge proudly,” the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Baynesville, parishioner said of the Good Samaritan Champion award, bestowed on hospital employees who go beyond the normal scope of duties in the community or inside the hospital.

Ms. Miller, a 17-year Good Samaritan employee, is the top blood donor there. She donates every eight weeks, and she has given 41 pints in the eight years she has donated.

The secretary of inpatient pharmacy said she gives blood because “working in a hospital, I don’t have the skills to actually treat patients or do something that significant to help them. This is one way I feel I can help someone even if it is behind the scenes.”

The CEO for the Greater Chesapeake and Potomac Region of The American Red Cross, Gary Ouellette, knows that countless lives have been touched by the generosity of frequent blood donors, “those who give of themselves every 56 days to help someone whom they never have and never will meet,” he said. “These donors are never thanked, yet it is almost certain that there are many members of their communities who owe their lives to these people.”

William Szimanski Sr. and Dorothy Ey, parishioners of St. Luke in Edgemere, are a few of the “super heroes” of their parish blood drives according to Pearl Gentling, who organizes the biannual collections and sees the same people return regularly.

“We are an aging community here,” she said. “They give until they can’t give anymore due to medical purposes.”

Mrs. Gentling, a former blood donor, might be classified a super hero on her own accord - she has coordinated the blood drives at St. Luke for about 45 years. The parish usually meets its goal of 55 units for the American Red Cross.

A human’s blood is a renewable resource according to Mr. Ouellette. “We are able to give again and again,” he said. “Those donors who have given several gallons of blood truly exemplify the meaning of community spirit and caring.”

On another donating chair in another parish, 78-year-old Richard Gross, a parishioner for 55 years of Holy Trinity, Glen Burnie, is a regular.

“The Red Cross says you give life, and so that’s why I do it,” he said. For the past 29 years, he has stuck out his arm every year. “And when the Red Cross calls me in big trouble,” he said, he gives additional pints. Mr. Gross will donate again March 25 and encourages others to do the same.

“They should bother. People should be concerned about their fellow man. You might need it (blood) yourself some day,” said Mr. Gross. “There’s no finer way to help someone in need; it’s even more important than giving money.”