All about an 88-year-old blood donor, Ronaldo, and our cats.

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Quarterly Newsletter - May 2020

Dear Blood Donor,

For most people, April was a month spent behind closed doors in full lockdown. As an essential service, we remained fully operational, but we can't say it was business as usual. Our 'normal' changes when a pandemic like COVID-19 strikes. We had to make changes to the way we schedule clinics, put extra safety protocols in place, and accommodate social distancing across the board. You can read more about this in Dr Caroline Hilton's article 'donating blood during the COVID-19 pandemic'.

But despite our new normal, we could still count on the loyalty of our donors. We are truly thankful to every donor that came out during the lockdown to each save three people's lives; I think at some stage you might have even saved more lives, by just leaving the house yours being the fourth.

In this edition of Blood Buzz, you'll read more about our employee advocacy programme, why Ronaldo remains tattoo-free, and you'll get great words of advice from an 88-year-old blood donor. And if you would still like to cook up a storm, please try out our iron-rich recipe, this month we feature a yummy lentil curry.

Enjoy and please stay safe.

Yours in blood donation,
Marike

Blood Recipient Joins Our Team

by Jihaan Opperman

Robin, a young, vibrant Donor Host at the Service, is extremely grateful for his second chance at life, all thanks to blood and bone marrow transfusions.

In his early teenage years, he visited the dentist for a routine tooth extraction. Concerns arose as he was still bleeding two weeks after the procedure. His life changed drastically when he was diagnosed with Leukemia. Robin had to stay isolated in the hospital for four months. During that time, he received four units of plasma and platelet products, two units of whole blood and two bone marrow transplants. After five years of treatment, he went into remission. This would not have been possible without the generous donations from bone marrow and blood donors.

Years later, when he was looking for employment, he landed on the careers page of the WCBS website. After submitting his application, he received a phone call inviting him for an interview. He started as a Procurement Assistant and was grateful for the opportunity. Within a short space of time, Robin grew within the organisation and today is one of the most dedicated and proud Donor Hosts who serves blood donors in the Cape Metropole area.

"Working here brings back a lot of memories. It is truly a gracious experience to look donors in the eye and say thank you. People should value every chance they get in life because second chances are never promised", says Robin.

Our Employee Advocacy Programme

by Liesel Krige

The Service recently partnered with "The Intern-ship" and selected ten staff members from various departments to be part of its employee advocacy programme. This programme aimed to upskill staff members so that they would be able to build the brand and promote the organisation at large on the social media platform LinkedIn.

Full training and support was provided for four months to enable all the individuals to complete the programme successfully. Our main tasks were to share positive posts and useful information about the Service, showcase what we do and how we work together, within the organisation. The whole team did exceptionally well. We managed to share a total of 214 posts, and we achieved a gold standard of above 80 %.

This programme has taught me how to master LinkedIn and optimise my profile for business and personal use. To my amazement, my hard work and dedication led me to win the prize for being the top brand ambassador.

Since I started working for the Service, I have learned valuable information about the importance of donating blood. I have also developed a huge passion for creating awareness about blood donations. The Service has not only managed to boost its visibility on LinkedIn, but has also proven to be one that values and invests in its employees. This makes me proud to be a WCBS employee!

Relocation of our Paarl Blood Bank

by Hayley Alie

After operating from the Paarl Branch premises for 28 years, we have outgrown the space and relocated on 8 April 2020. The Paarl Blood Bank moved to their new larger premises that is across the road from the Paarl Provincial Hospital.

The new Paarl Blood Bank is a state-of-the-art facility, equipped with the latest technologies for cross-match testing and issuing safe blood products for patients as efficiently as possible. It processes about 320 patient samples and issues over 580 blood products monthly. Located centrally in the region, the blood bank serves approximately nine hospitals and healthcare facilities situated in the communities of Paarl, Clanwilliam, Citrusdal, Piketberg, Porterville, Swartland and Stellenbosch.

We are hoping that the move to the new Paarl Blood Bank will improve our overall service delivery for patients in the region.

Donating Blood During the COVID-19 Pandemic

by Dr Caroline Hilton

The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in the public isolating themselves as far as possible to limit the spread of this infection. While this is a vital part of the management of this pandemic, the blood services still need to collect blood for patients, and the closure of schools and businesses has impacted our stocks. We are faced with the difficult challenge of balancing the need to collect enough blood versus protecting our staff and donors from potential COVID-19 transmission.

We have therefore implemented strict deferral rules to ensure that we only collect blood from a healthy, low-risk population. The public and blood donors have been notified that they refrain from presenting to donate blood if they have:

- Recently returned from travel outside of South Africa's borders
- Lived with individuals diagnosed with or suspected of having COVID-19 infection
- Been diagnosed with or suspected of having COVID-19 infection.

Universal precautions are also in place throughout WCBS facilities to minimise the risks of contracting or transmitting COVID-19 as follows:

- Staff are instructed to frequently wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and have been supplied with personal alcohol-based hand sanitisers.
- Hand sanitiser is freely available for use by blood donors at donation clinics.
- Staff have been instructed to avoid close contact with people who are sick, to stay at home when they are sick, and to maintain strict cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Cleaning and disinfection procedures for frequently touched objects and surfaces have been enhanced.
- Collection staff have been instructed to minimise the number of people waiting in queues at clinics and to request that people at the back of queues return at a later time to donate.
- Staff, who have close contact with donors at the time of the fingerprick testing and blood collection, have been supplied with masks and visors to cover their nose and mouth.
- All staff have been issued with masks and wear them at all times.
- Donors should also remember to please wear their masks when attending a blood donation clinic.

South Africans are no strangers to resource restrictions and social challenges, and we have the resilience to unite during times of stress. While the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic unfold, we will likely have to look at collecting blood in more efficient ways, while making the donation space as safe as possible. Thank you for your ongoing support during these difficult times – despite the restricted movement of the public, patients still require the lifesaving blood that you are donating.

Our Remarkable 88-year-old Blood Donor

by Craig Hicks

Meet Mr Hendrik Lombard, an 88-year-old man, who embodies consistency and dedication to donating blood. Mr Lombard is an active blood donor who began his donation journey while working at the Post Office in Windhoek, Namibia in the early 1960s. While we do not accept new donors over the age of 75, we allow senior donors over 75 to donate blood as long as their doctor clears it and they pass our screening processes.

Mr Lombard kept up his donations regularly. When he moved to Cape Town in the 1990s he continued to donate at the Dutch Reformed Church in Grey Avenue, Tableview. Mr Lombard has donated 145 units of blood while in Cape Town, and many, many more during his time in Windhoek.

When asked what the secrets to his health and vitality are, he simply replied, “I don’t eat too little, and I don’t eat too much – I also believe in the old adage of an ‘apple a day keeps the doctor away!’”

We congratulate Mr Lombard on his dedication and passion for the cause of blood donation and thank him for all his donations. We wish him many more healthy years and of course, many more blood donations.

Staff Provided the "Gees" at the Cape Town Cycle Tour

by Marike Gevers

It was a very early start for a committed group of employees when we left our head office at 04:15 on Sunday, 8 March 2020 to set-up our refreshment station at the Cape Town Cycle Tour. We were stationed on the M3 close to the Ladies Mile turn-off, where we provided the “gees” and poured Coke and PowerAde for thirsty cyclists. We brought our own DJ, and some of the cyclists sang along and danced on the road. Well done to all the cyclists that participated in the Cape Town Cycle Tour, we thoroughly enjoyed your "gees" as well.

Blood Donation Clinics Go Ahead – Come Rain or Shine

by Arlecia November

Our first clinic for 2020 in Beaufort West happened on 16 January. We started our 235 km journey early morning. About 20 km before our destination a traffic officer pulled us over and told us that due to protests in town, we could not go further. With the help of our Worcester Branch, the police and a traffic officer, who was a blood donor, we were able to get to the clinic.

Beaufort West normally has an average temperature of 24 ºC during January, however, on this day the temperature rose to 44 ºC. Donors told us that we chose the hottest day to come to Beaufort West and we were all struggling to get through the heat. The fans were on, but it was only circulating the hot air. The water and the juice wasn't even cooling down in the fridge.

Our next clinic in Beaufort West took place on 12 March 2020. This time we were mentally prepared for the hot weather conditions and geared up with ice coolers and lots of ice cold water. To our surprise, there was no sign of the sun; it was pouring with rain. This continued throughout the day, with intermittent thunderstorms.

We applaud our donors for coming to donate on a scorching day; with an attendance of 124 donors. During the rain we welcomed 111 donors to the clinic. Come rain or shine, we will be ready at our next blood donation clinic in May. Beaufort West, thank you for coming out to support us, you are real lifesavers!

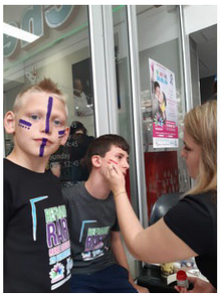
Rare Disease Day Initiative at N1 City

by Melanie Rossouw

Every year during February, thousands of events are organised around the world to mark the occasion of Rare Disease Day. On Saturday, 29 February 2020, the Service partnered with Rare Diseases South Africa at our N1 City blood donation centre to shed some light on this important subject. Eligible donors showed their support by donating blood. Every donor enjoyed a cupcake after donation, while children had their faces painted – all compliments of Rare Diseases South Africa.

There are currently over 7 000 rare diseases in the world, and 3.7 million people living with a rare disease in South Africa; with 72 % of them being genetic and 70 % starting in childhood. Rare Diseases South Africa fights to have rare diseases recognised and treated by connecting patients, families and patient groups and mobilising the South African rare disease community. They strengthen the patient voice and shape research, policies and patient services.

"Thank you for all your help and support; it really was an amazing experience. We can't wait for next year's event and think it will be even bigger", said Chane Botha, representative from Rare Diseases South Africa.



Peer Promoter Training an Annual Highlight for Our Youth Donors

by Jihaan Opperman

Blood Buddy welcomed learners to our Peer Promoter Training at our head office. The learners enjoyed the finest treats from our refreshments range before they received the best tips on recruiting young blood donors.

The training session focused on recruitment and retention ideas to roll out at their schools. The guided tour through our state-of-the-art laboratories was a big highlight, as learners saw the processing of the blood into various blood products and got to understand how just one donation can save three lives.

“I was inspired by the fact that I could help someone in need, and this training will help me do that well”, says Mou’ath Saidi from Rylands High School. Nnenna Osonda, from Milnerton High, had this to say, “I want to create an impact in this world, and now I feel ready to do that.”

Ronaldo’s Reason for Remaining Tattoo Free

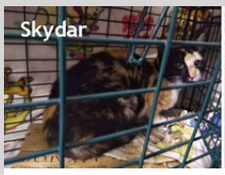
by Craig Hicks

Cristiano Ronaldo fans would have noticed something different about him from other high-profile footballers, that’s besides being one of the most naturally gifted players in the world.

Unlike the likes of David Beckham, Wayne Rooney and Lionel Messi, Cristiano does not have a single tattoo on his body. Does he have a very low pain threshold? The way he often reacts to tackles on the field might lead one to that conclusion, but that isn’t the reason. Is he afraid of needles? That couldn’t be further from the truth because he is a regular blood donor and probably the most high-profile active ambassador for blood donation.

In an interview with the Italian news website Diretta, Ronaldo said: "I don't have tattoos so that I can donate blood more often." While people with tattoos can donate blood, newly inked people must wait three months before donating blood again to safeguard the blood supply, and can return to regular donation after this period. Ronaldo really is remarkable on and off the field.

Source: https://www.businessinsider.com/why-cristiano-ronaldo-chooses-not-have-tattoos-on-his-body-2019-11?IR=T



Our Purrrrfect Residents

by Gloria Kula

We have three frisky cats at our head office; named Skydar, Nethal and Diablo. Our feral feline friends were caught leisurely wandering around within the vicinity, and have never looked back. They have made the area near our maintenance department their permanent residence.

Our furry friends are well looked after by a staff member who had these cats neutered and vaccinated. Medical assistance is provided as and when needed. So if you see them lazing around don’t be startled. Skydar, Nethal and Diablo are now part of our family.

Iron-rich Recipe: Lentil Curry

by Lise-Mari Badenhorst

Prep: 25 mins | Cook: 35 mins | Serves: 6 people

Ingredients
1 large onion, chopped
3 cloves garlic, chopped
Thumb size piece of ginger, grated
1 stalk of lemongrass, grated
4 large carrots, chopped
200 g green beans, cut
1 medium butternut
1 red pepper
1 yellow pepper
1 punnet of mushrooms
1 punnet of coriander: ½ for food and ½ for garnish
1 can of coconut milk
2 cans of lentils
1 cup of vegetable stock
1 cup of water
1½ tablespoons of mild curry
1 tablespoon of turmeric
Salt and pepper to taste
150 ml white wine (optional)

Method:
Fry onion, coriander, carrot and garlic in olive oil for 5 minutes. Add the wine (optional).

Add the curry powder, turmeric, ginger, lemongrass, salt and pepper to taste. Stir for 2 minutes. Pour in the stock, cup of water and add the butternut. Boil for 10 minutes.

Add the peppers, beans, mushrooms and can of coconut milk. Boil for another 10 minutes.

Add the lentils and simmer for 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and let it rest for 3 minutes.

Serve with Basmati rice.
Best served with a glass of chilled Chardonnay or a pineapple and ginger tea.

PRODUCTION EDITOR
Marike Gevers

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Michelle Vermeulen

PROOFREADER
Hayley Alie

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Christoff van Wyk

Western Cape Blood Service
Old Mill Road, Pinelands, 7405 | P.O. Box 79, Howard Place, 7450
t: 021 507 6300 | f: 021 531 0322 | e: info@wcbs.org.za

SMS "Blood" to 33507 and we'll call you back (R1.50 per SMS)

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