



Wheeler encourages donors to give Jan. 23

Travis Wheeler was just like any other 19-year-old. He filled his free time with hunting, fishing and spending time with friends, until he received a diagnosis that would change his plans for at least the next three years.

Last May, Travis began to notice he bruised easily and felt fatigued after daily activities. A few weeks later, a blood test confirmed why.

Travis was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. He's undergoing chemotherapy and has received 30 pints of blood products during his treatment, ranging from platelets to red blood cells.

Despite his diagnosis, Travis is staying in high spirits and is encouraging the Imperial community to make a difference for patients like him.

On Jan. 23, the American Red Cross will host a blood drive in his honor at Chase County Schools, to help collect blood donations for patients in need.

The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2013 more than 1.6 million people were diagnosed with cancer, many of whom require blood products during radiation and chemotherapy treatments.

"No one plans on having cancer. No one plans on needing a transfusion to help save his or her life," said April Oppliger, spokesperson for the American Red Cross Midwest Blood Services Region.

"When these patients are in need, however, the Red Cross relies on individual donors to give those blood donations that make a difference," she said.

The Imperial blood drive comes at an important time for the Red Cross. The winter months can be a difficult time to collect blood donations due to inclement weather and seasonal illnesses. All blood types are needed, especially types O negative, A negative and B negative. One blood donation could help save up to three lives.

The local blood drive will be Jan. 23 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Chase County High School Gym, 520 E. Ninth St.

The Red Cross hopes to collect 110 blood donations during this drive, which is enough to help save as many as 330 lives.

How to donate blood

Simply call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit redcrossblood.org to make an appointment or for more information. All blood types are needed to ensure a reliable supply for patients. A blood donor card or driver's license or two other forms of identification are required at check-in.

Individuals who are 17 years of age (16 with parental consent in Nebraska), weigh at least 110 pounds and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood. High school students and other donors 18 years of age and younger also have to meet certain height and weight requirements.

