

By Russ Pankonin, The Imperial Republican

Organizers of the two blood drives held last week couldn't say enough about the number of people who turned out to give blood in honor of Makenna Wallin.

That's just the way people in Imperial and Chase County respond to things like this!

Young 15-year-old Makenna has been an inspiration for all of us as she battles AML—acute myeloid leukemia, a cancer that attacks the red blood cells.

She started her treatment in December and after being back home for about a week and a half, will head back to Denver for her fourth and final round of chemotherapy.

Her mother said this round of treatments will require a five- to six-week stay in the hospital this time.

A regular blood drive conducted by students at the school was already planned for March 21. After Makenna's diagnosis, the idea developed to hold the drive in honor of Makenna. She receives blood as part of the treatment process.

The one-day drive turned into two with a second drive scheduled Friday at the Imperial Bible Church.

When drive organizers School Nurse Angie Paisley and Liz Mollendor were asked if having the drive in honor of Makenna had a positive effect, their answers were almost identical—something to the effect of "Oh, my goodness, yes!"

At the school, they collected 94 units, the most ever for a drive at the school. In addition, Paisley said they had eight new donors including two adults who had never given blood before, along with four students who were first-time donors.

She credited her sophomore, junior and senior organizers for taking special ownership in making this drive so successful.

At the Imperial Bible Church, 49 more units were collected for an overall total of 143 units.

I hadn't donated for at least five years after I was deferred for some medicine I was on. Then, I simply got out of the habit. As I was leaving the school Thursday after going to have lunch with the kindergartners, I saw the poster with Makenna's picture on it.

As a result, I turned around, headed down to the gym and gave blood for the first time in a long time. I'm going to get back in the habit again, too.

While at the school drive, it was especially meaningful to see some of her friends and fellow students accept the challenge to give blood for the very first time.

It was great to hear the organizers reflect on the impact of giving blood in honor of Makenna made in last week's drive.

As a community, we have rallied around Makenna as she seeks her cure for AML. Imperial's response to the blood drive was yet another way of showing support for Makenna. Like I said—that's just what people around here do for friends, neighbors, acquaintances and even for people we may not know.

That's just what we do!