

Red Cross recognizes Chippewa Valley schools as outstanding blood drive partner

School district is one of 17 schools statewide to receive recognition

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On Oct. 24 during a Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education meeting, Chippewa Valley Schools was recognized by the American Red Cross for outstanding service in recruiting, educating, and inspiring blood drive donors and volunteers. (PHOTO COURTESY OF DIANE BLAIN)

By **NICOLE TUTTLE** |

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COVID-19 put a stranglehold on the American Red Cross's ability to hold blood drives, but Chippewa Valley Schools was one of just 17 districts across the state that helped keep the blood flowing.

“First and foremost, I want to thank the district for partnering, being a partner with the American Red Cross through blood donations for numerous years,” American Red Cross Detroit North District Manager Jennifer Killewald said on Oct. 24. “In particular this award is recognizing your contributions for last year, kind of the post COVID-ish period, where it was very challenging for the American Red Cross to find partners in education to open their doors to host blood drives.”

On Oct. 24, Chippewa Valley Schools (CVS) was recognized with a certificate by the American Red Cross for outstanding service in recruiting, educating, and inspiring blood drive donors and

volunteers. The recognition took place during a Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education meeting, held at the district's administration building in Clinton Township.

"Last year during the school year of '21-'22, Chippewa Valley and Dakota high schools, the community, donated 79 pints of blood," Killewald said. "Seventy-nine pints of blood helped as many as 237 patients in the hospitals. It is a very significant contribution to our community."

Chippewa Valley Schools was one of just 17 school districts statewide that received the recognition, according to Killewald.

"The biomedical committee has reviewed the efforts of over 100 local K-12s, ISDs and RESAs, and for last school year, only 17 of these districts will receive the certificate of recognition," Killewald said.

On Nov. 7, Killewald provided more information regarding 2021-22 school year blood collection in CVS. She said that Chippewa Valley High School collected 42 pints during their one blood drive event.

"The health occupation students recruit donors and volunteer at the drive, giving them invaluable experience, leadership opportunities, and sometimes 'real life' experience in attending to a donor that may have a reaction after the blood donations process," Killewald said.

Dakota High School collected 37 pints during their one blood drive event, with National Honor Society students providing a consistently calm and fun blood drive environment, Killewald said.

On Oct. 24 Killewald described the devastating effect of COVID-19 on blood donations, and the gradual comeback that was required of the Red Cross.

"The importance really is our donors and our sponsors and districts like yours, that open their doors to us, but especially during COVID," Killewald said. "What happened when the governor shut down the state of Michigan, every single one of our blood drives cancelled. Every single one."

"We collect approximately 450 pints a day, and that is what our local hospitals need in order to service their patients. And there was not one bag of blood collected in the days that followed that announcement."

Killewald said that it was due to long-term partnerships with local churches and schools, or via high school students that worked through their churches when schools couldn't host blood drives, that the Red Cross was able to rejuvenate the blood donation program.

"And still today it is always an extra ask and request to go into any environment to ask a community to give above and beyond what they normally do. And we recognize the challenges that it has. We frankly, bring in a mini, a miniature hospital, a medical setting, into your district and ask that you have your students come and donate blood, along with perhaps their parents," Killewald said.

On Nov. 4, Killewald said many of the Red Cross' lifelong donors became first-time donors in high school. On Oct. 24 Superintendent Ron Roberts said that although CVS provides a community

service by partnering with the Red Cross on blood drives, the experience is equally beneficial to students.

“In a way we are a little bit selfish, too, because of our medical careers academy that we run at both of our high schools,” Roberts said. “And so I know that these blood drives, many of the volunteers who help operate the drives on these days are our students. And we just think it is not only good that we give to the community, but you in a sense give to us, to allow us to have our students just learn more skills.”

Chippewa Valley High School will be one of several sites for a Clinton Township blood drive set for Feb. 7-9, 2023. Chippewa Valley High School, located at 18300 19 Mile Road in Clinton Township, will host the drive on Feb. 7 2023, from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. Clinton Township Deputy Treasurer Carolyn DeMates said on Oct. 24 that for the last 20 years, CVS has been a site sponsor for the township’s annual community blood drive.

“Chippewa Valley and its students have stepped up, promoting and volunteering and donating at the Clinton Community Blood Drive every year,” DeMates said. “The site has always impressed and in fact over those 20 years, they have actually brought in over 1,000 units of blood, which has the capacity to help over 3,000 people.”

Other sites for the Clinton Township Community Blood Drive in February 2023 will include the following:

- Clinton-Macomb Public Library Main Library, 40900 Romeo Plank, Clinton Township. Feb. 7, 2023, 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- Clinton Township Senior Center, 40730 Romeo Plank, Clinton Township. Feb. 8, 2023, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Feb. 9, 2023 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Clinton Macomb Public Library South Branch, 35670 South Gratiot in Clinton Township. Feb. 8, 2023, 12:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- Clintondale High School, 35200 Little Mack Ave., Clinton Township. Feb. 9, 2023, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

DeMates said that as the dates approach, potential donors can register through a Red Cross app or on the website, or by calling the Clinton Township Treasurer’s Office. The Red Cross website is available at [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org), and potential donors can seek a location by clicking on Give Blood and Find a Blood Drive. The website also provides information regarding blood donations requirements and how to prepare to donate. The Clinton Township Treasurer’s Office can be reached at 586-286-9313.

Clinton Township Treasurer Paul Gielegem said that particularly at schools, donors are in general accepted by appointment, which is why scheduling through one of the offered means is important.

“Our goal for this three day blood drive is approximately 275 pints to help all patients in need,” Killewald said.

Gielegem said that Clinton Township assists in promotion of the blood drive, and in the recruitment of volunteers. Killewald said that the drive is placing particular emphasis on blood

donor diversity. She said that in the U.S., it is estimated that over 100,000 people have sickle cell disease, and that this disease affects one out of 365 African American births.

“Patients with this disease may rely on regular blood transfusions throughout their lives,” Killewald said. “It is essential the blood they receive be the most compatible match possible, from somebody of the same race or similar ethnicity. Right now, there isn’t enough blood donors to meet the urgent need for patients with sickle cell disease.”