



The Gift of **LIFE**



By Sameera Mangena, Kansas HOSA President

Just before his 16th birthday, Eric came down with what his family thought was the flu. A blood test at the hospital revealed that the situation was much more serious — Eric had leukemia. He commenced immediate treatment, but what saved his life was blood donated by complete strangers. Over the course of his treatment, Eric needed 25 units of red blood cells and over 30 units of platelets. Thanks to donors, he is now 19, in remission, and attends the University of Idaho. (www.giftlife2.org)



This story had a happy ending; but the fact is, for every happy ending, there are a thousand stories about other people who weren't as fortunate. Blood donation has risen in recent years due to a heightened awareness throughout the United States, but that is still not enough. As members of HOSA, it is our job to be ambassadors for those in need and spread the message to our peers that donating blood is a relatively simple procedure that could have a priceless effect on someone's life.

It would probably be a good idea to know something about the process of donating blood before trying to convince others to do it. Only 5 percent of eligible donors across the nation donate blood, but the number of transfusions nationwide increases by 9 percent every year. About 38,000 units of blood are used each day in the United States, and one unit is about the equivalent of one pint. Twenty five percent of us are going to need a blood donation at some point in our lives, but blood cannot be manufactured; it has to come as a gift from people. Each blood donation takes only 45 to 60 minutes, and one donation can help up to three people. (www.mayoclinic.org, www.mybloodyourblood.org)

As you can see, blood donation is an opportunity that not nearly enough people take advantage of. For most, the reason they don't donate is because they don't know anything about it or how to go about doing it. Now that the first part has been taken care of, the question is, where can you go to donate blood? For high school students, there is always the opportunity to organize a blood drive. Get the word out to your fellow students that donating blood is a very safe and easy procedure. Organizations such as the Red Cross get the majority of their blood donations through blood drives. If there isn't a local blood drive somewhere, look online for places to donate in your area.



There are so many people like Eric out there in need of blood that only we can give. As a young generation of future healthcare professionals, it is our job to get the message out there about what people can do to make someone's life better. You never know when you might be in a situation where that gift of life could help save you or someone you love.

Kansas HOSA State Officers 2007-2008 (left to right): Mackenzie Nix, Treasurer; Jerry Carmona, Sentinel; Allyson Fowler, Secretary; Carly Spooner, Chaplain; Skyla Jordan, Historian; Michael Roberson, Parliamentarian; Miesha Brison, Vice-President, and Sameera Mangena, President.

