

Red Cross blood donations help cancer victim

By LAURIE PELLICHERO
Special to The Times

Sandy Gray knows how important platelet donations can be. In 2001, her 13-month-old daughter Samantha was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, an aggressive cancer of the sympathetic nervous system. A biopsy revealed the cancer had spread to Sami's bone marrow, which classified the disease as stage four.

To battle the disease, Sami's treatments included five cycles of high-dose chemotherapy, a six-hour surgery, two stem cell transplants, 10 radiation

treatments and six months of oral Accutane.

During Sami's treatment, her blood levels were monitored daily. A surgically installed IV tube enabled her to receive the chemotherapy, medicines, fluids and blood products she needed to survive. She completed her last dose of medication and went into remission on Sept. 7, 2002.

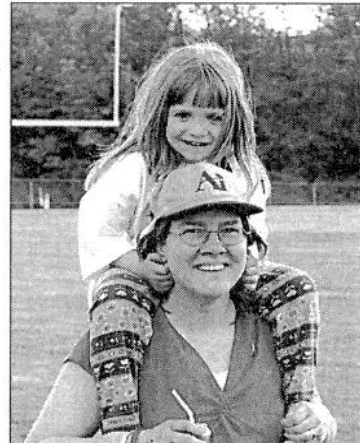
Once Sami was well, Sandy made a commitment to donate platelets at least four times a year at the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey's Blood Donor Center in Princeton. Sandy views the platelet donation as only two hours of her time — not much compared to what a patient is going through. "I have lived through this with Sami," she said.

According to the Red Cross, without platelets, which promote blood clotting, a patient can experience side effects such as nose bleeds, brain bleeds and possible stroke. During her treatment, Sami received 34 units of platelets.

Sandy is grateful to the platelet donors who helped save Sami's life.

"Thank you for your platelet donations," she said. "I hope you think of patients like Sami the next time you go to donate blood. This will remind you of why you are giving up your time. Every day, people choose to give their time and that's what makes it so special."

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American Red Cross of Central New Jersey photo
Thanks in part to blood donors, Sandy Gray's daughter Sami will attend kindergarten next year.

APPEAL

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Funds from this year's Times Holiday Appeal will be used to support the services and programs of the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey.

The Times deducts no overhead expenses. All money goes directly to the designated non-profit agency.

To make a donation in support of the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey, please make your check payable to The Times Holiday Appeal and mail or hand deliver it to: 500 Perry St., Box 847, Trenton, N.J. 08605. To make a donation online, visit www.njredcross.org.

All gifts will be acknowledged and anonymity, if requested, will be granted.

For more information about blood donation, visit the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey's Web site at www.njredcross.org or call (609) 951-8550.



Every minute of every day, someone needs blood. Many people need blood transfusions to live. Trauma victims, surgery patients, individuals living with sickle cell disease, cancer patients and premature infants can all need blood.

When you donate blood through the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey, your gift is tested and then separated into components — red cells, platelets and plasma. Each component meets a different and important need, and every donation can help as many as three people.

Last year, the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey collected 16,785 units of blood through blood drives and its Blood Donor Center at 707 Alexander Road in Princeton.