Blood drive falls short of goal

Summer donations down because of lack of students on campus

By MATT ERICKSON
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The American Red Cross was on campus Tuesday for a one-day, one-only blood drive. And judging by early donor numbers, the Red Cross had to go into a state of near red alert.

With only an hour and a half before the drive was scheduled to end at 4 p.m., the Red Cross had only 60 donations. The organization’s goal for Tuesday: 200 pints.

The Red Cross has urged the entire nation to donate blood. Summer months traditionally pose a concern for the Red Cross due to school closings and vacations.

The only possible explanation for the significant drop in totals in this summer’s one-day drive and last summer’s, which netted 202 pints, is the apparent drop of enrollment at Eastern.

But this summer’s enrollment is actually up from last summer’s, although summer figures have declined in the past five years.

We’re trying to figure out why it is so low,” Ida Caldwell said. “We’ve stood on street corners in pizza suits, we’ve put flyers on cars. We’ve been in almost every building on campus trying to get people to donate blood.”

Helen Gwin said the American Red Cross’ goal for the Missouri-Illinois region is 1,000 pints per day. With final figures for Eastern’s drive falling well short of the 200-pint goal, the difference will have to be made up elsewhere.

“We’ll have to have a drive somewhere else to make up for the low totals here,” Gwin said.

Caldwell said Eastern is typically a donation-friendly campus, and the Red Cross can usually expect around 10 percent of Eastern’s enrollment to donate blood.

“This is a really good campus,” Caldwell said. “People here really donate. We usually do 10 percent, so if Eastern’s enrollment for this summer was, for example, 1,000 students — we’d be on target.”

Jill Dickerson, a Red Cross intern from Eastern, said the lack of students on campus might necessitate a lower initial goal for future summers.

“There’s just not as many people down here,” Dickerson said. “People haven’t given yet themselves because her blood pressure was not yet at an acceptable level. “Our bigger drives have a 1,200-pint goal. So maybe 200 pints is too much for the summer.”

But even though enrollment on campus decreased this summer’s drive total, members of the community still come out with great regularity. Nancy Darner of Charleston has been giving blood for nearly half a century.

“I first started giving blood in 1950,” Darner said from her cot with a bandage stuck to her left arm. She said any pain normally associated with giving blood has never affected her. “It’s never bothered me,” Darner said. “I’m doing something useful (by giving blood). And I try to come back every time — but you can’t hit every blood drive.”

Red Cross blood drive nurse Angie Dirks said often giving blood makes donors feel better physically than before the needle went in.

“Sometimes, it makes people feel better because they’re getting rid of the old blood and bringing in the new,” Dirks said.

Even if Tuesday’s drive didn’t reach the pre-set goals, Caldwell said high school students on campus for summer camps have come in and expressed interest in giving blood. Although they are not yet eligible, their interest bodes well for the future.

“Some of them want to donate, but they can’t yet,” Caldwell said. “But at least that’s a positive for the future.”

Caldwell said Eastern’s Blood Drive Committee, chaired by Brian Miller, is still seeking out volunteers for the committee for the fall semester. Those interested can contact Miller at the Physical Science Building for more information.

The next scheduled blood drive in Charleston will be Wednesday, July 30, at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, 921 Madison Ave.