American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

A proud tradition of saving lives

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On a Tech Ops – Tulsa blood drive collection day, Aviation Maintenance Technician Del Cotton is busy doing a little bit of everything. He's helping American Red Cross set up stations at Hangar 4, transporting donors around the large base, welcoming participants and making sure they are comfortable while they donate. You'll find him behind the grill cooking hamburgers, handing out T-shirts and addressing any questions. But he loves it, especially when he can catch up with the regular donors.

Del's been helping organize this drive for 10 years, after he volunteered to fill in as coordinator. He says he got hooked. He's passionate about the assistance that the Red Cross provides and about educating his fellow team members on the importance of donating blood.

Del says that there are two sides of the Red Cross — disaster relief response and the medical emergency response they provide.

"If there is a tornado that sweeps through a neighborhood; they are there. If my grandmother needs a blood transfusion; they are there. You can always find someone who has been helped by the Red Cross, and I'm proud to help contribute to that," Del said. "It's all about the power of saving lives."

Since 1954, Tulsa's Transport Workers Union 514 and American Airlines have partnered with the Red Cross by hosting collection events at the maintenance base five times a year. Each one brings in about 400 to 500 units of blood, putting Tech Ops – Tulsa's blood drive among the top 20 in the nation. It's also the longest running blood drive in Oklahoma and among the longest running nationally.

According to the Red Cross, blood donors help patients of all ages through all types of emergency events — accidents, burns, heart surgery, organ transplants and even cancer. In fact, every two seconds, someone in the U.S.

needs blood. The Red Cross provides 40 percent of the nation’s blood supply.

That kind of need helps drive Del and his fellow team members’ passion for donating their time to help make the blood drive successful. TWU members who help coordinate the drive tend to stick around — there is little to no turnover when it comes to helping organize the event. Del works with an all-volunteer team: Shawn Allan, inspector; Donna Florea, Aviation Maintenance Technician; and Amanda Cates, Overhaul Support Mechanic.

Each of the five yearly collection events is held over roughly a week, offering different donation windows so team members from all shifts have a chance to give. All blood donors receive a T-shirt, enjoy food and can watch a movie in the rest area.

Most whole blood donors are eligible to give every 56 days. Del spaces out the events to line up with when donors can give next. Gary Baca, Aviation Maintenance Technician, has been donating to the blood drive for years. “This is something I’ve done since I was in the military,” he said. “For me, it’s all about saving lives.”

AMT Gary Baca donates blood every year, something he started doing when he was in the military.

Donna Florea, Shawn Allan, Amanda Cates and Del Cotton volunteer to organize the blood drive.