

## ASBP Volunteers Build Lifelong Friendships Through Memorial Blood Drives

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John James (2<sup>nd</sup> left), Sherry Klander (front), and Noot Burnett (right) after the successful blood drive.

John James and Newton “Noot” Burnett, along with fellow *Brazos de Dios* bikers, champion the Armed Services Blood Program (ASBP) with bi-annual motorcycle rides to the Fort Hood, TX blood donor center to give blood. These good-hearted bikers, part of a Harley Owners Group chapter in College Station, Texas, began this regular pilgrimage to Fort Hood in August 2006 when they decided their blood donations should go to soldiers and their families.

“These rides, the *Chad A. Burnett Memorial Blood Rides*, are a tribute to Noot’s son, Chad, a decorated member of the Texas A&M University Corps of Cadets and U.S. Air Force C-130 navigator who was tragically killed in an auto accident in 2002,” explains John.

“Early on, John through *Brazos de Dios* embraced my late son Chad in memoriam to give a more personal meaning to our mission of blood donation” says Noot. This successful outreach, while paying tribute to an outstanding young man’s memory, led John and Noot to seek ways to host a blood drive that was closer to home which would allow even more people to donate.

While good friends John and Noot were looking for ways to host their own military blood drive in College Station, Sherry Klander was busy working as a volunteer at an ASBP blood drive in McGregor, TX. She was scheduled to deploy to Tikrit, Iraq with the U.S. Army National Guard, and knew first-hand how important her support of the military blood program was.

“This is just too easy: You sit and give an hour of your time and in return you save a life by donating blood,” thought Sherry. She decided right then that she would host an ASBP blood drive upon return from deployment.

Fast forward one year. Sherry is home from Iraq, and John and Noot are still looking for ways to host a local military blood drive. While donating blood at an ASBP blood drive in McGregor, John and Noot were then introduced to Sherry, who was visiting with a mutual friend, Donna Smith, an equally avid supporter of the ASBP mission.

As the new friends talked, they discovered their mutual interest to host a blood drive and decided that the joint drive would honor Noot’s son and would be christened *The Chad A. Burnett “Bleed Maroon” Blood Drive*, to be held on the campus of Texas A&M University. Sherry would make it happen.

“You must understand Sherry is not only a full-time student, full-time Corps of Cadet Company V-1 senior with the rank of Cadet Major, but also works part-time to fund her education.” stresses Noot. He adds: “It is Sherry’s steadfast determination that made this drive happen.”

And so it was that friendship, tenacity, and the love immemorial of a young man’s passing that saw Noot and John ride their Harley Davidson’s onto Texas A&M campus on November 27, 2007, where a long-awaited blood drive was held. Over the course of a three-day blood drive held in the Sanders Corps Center under the auspices of the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC), more than 260 young people lined up to donate blood.

“There were many nervous first-time donors, but after donating, all walked away with proud faces,” states John.

The ever industrious Sherry designed *These Colors Don’t Run, They Flow* Texas A&M maroon T-shirts, which were wildly popular with all donors. Donors also received leather *Bleed Maroon* bracelets which were sponsored by *Brazos de Dios* and the owners of Independence Harley Davidson- Buell dealership in College Station.

Sherry, John, and Noot are proud of the acknowledgement by university officials and their acceptance of *The Chad A. Burnett “Bleed Maroon” Blood Drive* as a tradition. “Giving blood changes your life forever,” reflects John who then adds: “It seems like a piece of cake to donate blood for those who are away and their families who are waiting on their safe return.”

If you would like to become an ASBP blood donor or volunteer, visit [www.militaryblood.dod.mil](http://www.militaryblood.dod.mil) for more information and to schedule a donation appointment near you. If you’d like more information on how to support the “Bleed Maroon” blood drives, please contact Sherry Klander at [Klander.s.07@gmail.com](mailto:Klander.s.07@gmail.com).