

SOLDIERS HELPING SOLDIERS

An Ongoing Partnership between Fort Eustis, VA and Fort Bragg, NC Sets Blood Donation Record

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MAJ Ryan King
Fort Eustis 8th Transportation Brigade S-1



A soldier of the 8th Transportation Brigade gladly donating blood for his fellow soldiers abroad.

On January 29-31, 2008 at the Fort Eustis, VA Reserve Center, the 8th Transportation Brigade, its Initial Entry Training (IET) Soldiers, and the Armed Services Blood Program's (ASBP) blood donor center from Fort Bragg, NC set a new record by collecting 568 units of blood, more than doubling the previous record. This blood drive marks the fourth year this combined team has advanced efforts to encourage soldiers to donate blood at their quarterly blood drive.

The ASBP is a Department of Defense (DOD) program composed of Army, Navy and Air Force personnel with the mission of supporting our troops and their families with blood and blood products. With the Global War on Terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan, blood is a vital resource that is desperately needed to support our troops at home and around the world. The ASBP is an essential tool for gathering this vital resource.

“Many of our comrades in theater need blood products because of the tough fight they continue to face.” states COL James Herson, 8th Transportation Brigade Commander. “We believe in the soldier’s creed and its pledge to never leave a fallen comrade behind. We are not going to leave these comrades behind –we are going to help take care of them and get them home with our donations of blood. We are fortunate that we have had a great assist from MacDonald Army Medical Clinic at Fort Eustis and representatives from the ASBP from Fort Bragg, NC to step up our pledge to provide more blood for the fight.”

Since the ASBP relies on volunteer donors for the supply of blood, a Fort Eustis battalion is chosen for each blood drive to coordinate donor recruitment and logistics. In an effort to increase blood donations, trainees who donate receive a certificate of appreciation from their brigade commander, which equals to promotion points later in their careers. The outpour of support was so tremendous, that an additional day was scheduled to accommodate donors. “The turnout here has been incredible and the blood donated by these great soldiers will directly support sick and injured military members and their

families. These soldiers are the lifeline that wounded troops are counting on” said Linda Ellerbe, the ASBP blood donor recruiter at Fort Bragg.

Due to short shelf life of blood products and the injuries sustained during military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is necessary for a blood donor center to collect large numbers of blood each week just to support combat actions. This is no small task as approximately 43% of active military personnel are temporarily ineligible to donate blood due to their deployments outside the United States. The largest pool of qualified donors now comes from training units like the 8th Transportation Brigade. These new soldiers are the key to meeting the military’s blood needs. With this vital mission in mind, the 8th Transportation Brigade at Fort Eustis continuously promotes quarterly blood drives and places a large command emphasis on the ASBP and its efforts. In support of this mission, PFC Hochmuth states: “I am happy to do this for my fellow soldiers. Soon I may be one of the soldiers at war that needs this blood.”

In addition to the outstanding blood drives held at Fort Eustis, VA, the ASBP holds regular blood drives at all 22 blood donor centers worldwide. To find out more about the ASBP and schedule a blood donation, please visit www.militaryblood.dod.mil.