

NHS Blood Drive  
By Helena Budnik

On Monday, September 15, the National Honor Society held its annual Blood Drive at Stamford High School, giving students an opportunity to do a good deed and perhaps save a life.

The American Red Cross set up food tables, cots, and screening booths in the small gym located on the 7th floor and offered services to students seventeen years of age and older. Many teachers, students and administrators took time to donate blood.

For almost all students it was their first time donating blood. When asked why they decided to do so, a great number professed their desire to help others. Senior class president Isaiah Bienaime said that he “wanted to save someone’s life” and that the Blood Drive was a “great cause that all Stamford High students should participate in if they are healthy donors.” Jeanne Signey, another 12th grader, declared, “I did it because I thought it was for a good cause. People need it so why not take some time out of your day and help out?”

While many did it for the greater good some had other, less honorable, reasons. Senior Andrew Trinh admitted that he “did it to get out of class” and many other students confessed that their classmates’ talk of free drinks and sweets convinced them to go down and volunteer.

A number of teachers headed down to the drive during their free periods. Others opted to participate when they had more time- for them the estimated 45 minutes that the process would take left them at risk of missing their incoming class. However, each teacher enthusiastically encouraged their students to head down, whether or not they had a chance to. Mr. White, a participant in the drive, called it a “great cause” that every healthy person should try to be involved in” and added that he hoped that “students will see their teachers participating and follow in their example.”

The time that it took for students to give blood varied. Some were in and out in 30 minutes. Others stayed for over an hour. A good number stayed longer than necessary in order to skip class. Why did the process take so long? The screening that Red Cross officials had to do was extensive. They asked a lengthy amount of questions in order to ascertain whether or not a student was a viable donor. The questionnaire included whether or not a student had been raped, if they had any tattoos, whether they’re sexually active, and where their latest vacation spots were. A finger prick was also taken in order to further test the blood.

Betty Genter, a Red Cross volunteer, explained that there were many reasons why people were turned away. Low iron was a contributor-a trait more common in women than men. Recent travel to malaria infested countries such as Mexico, Costa Rica, and others, instantly barred access. In that respect, travel to India was also specifically analyzed. If a person once lived in India he cannot give blood for three years, after visiting the country

for any amount of time he must wait one year. Anyone with cold symptoms, for example sneezing, coughing and sniffing was also sent away.

Even though about thirty people couldn't give blood for various reasons, the numbers that attended the drive far exceeded expectations. The Red Cross came with a goal number of 35 pints- 1 per donor. Genter claimed that over 75 students showed up ready for the task. The drive closed at noon, a fact many students did not know, so even more came after their lunch periods. They were not accounted for in the total, but would have raised the numbers even higher.

The Red Cross holds blood drives in all local schools throughout the year and will, most likely, return soon. Any students who did not have the chance to participate this time, will have another shot to make a difference very soon.

If any students are especially eager to help the cause they can go to the Tully Center any Saturday morning between the hours of 8 am and 12:00 pm. Many churches around Stamford, such as St. Cecilia's Parish on Newfield Avenue, will begin hosting monthly blood drives. They plan on making the hours longer and more workable than at many other health centers so that those who can not make it early in the morning will have an opportunity.