MIT blood donation decreasing

By Frank Tonindy

Blood drives, an MIT tradition since before the Second World War, are still going on but the Institute is no longer New England’s or even Massachusetts’s largest blood donor.

According to the coordinators of the upcoming Spring Blood Drive, MIT has fallen from its top spot in blood contributions for the American Red Cross due to a decline in donors since 1971, which was the biggest year ever for blood drives. The Spring Drive, in that year netted 2346 pints, the largest amount ever received in an MIT drive; but the totals have declined since then.

MIT is, however, in no danger of losing its coverage from the Red Cross, under which all members of the Institute community have access to blood for themselves and their immediate families. The 4000 pints that MIT donates annually still qualifies the Institute for coverage, since the number is greater than 25 percent of the MIT community.

Operating a blood drive

The blood drives, which are run by the Technology Community Association in cooperation with the Red Cross, are almost year-round affairs. Nineteen days out of the year are devoted to blood drives, at Labor Day, in the Fall Drive, and in the biggest of all, the Spring Drive. Coordinating and organizing the drives fills in most of the time between the drives themselves.

The coordinators plan to revise the appointment schedule for the drives this year to enable more people to donate without long waits. “It’s very important that you pre-register, and re-schedule your appointment if you cannot make the original time,” said Gail Rubin ’76, Drive Chairperson. “Soliciting for appointments will begin next week in the dorms and fraternities, and we’re trying to get appointments made for as many people as possible.”

The Spring Drive, to be held March 4-8 and 11-15, is going to be “an all-out effort to reverse the downward trend in donations,” Rubin said. The Blood Drive will be going on during business hours, except on two days when night hours will be scheduled.

Despite the downturn in MIT’s donations, the Institute is still the largest blood donor among educational institutions in New England. “Harvard is right behind us in donations,” Rubin said, “and they’re moving up fast. Hopefully, we can motivate enough people to give to keep us ahead of them.”

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