

Drive to raise awareness among young people about blood donation

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In recent years, Singaporeans have taken an interest in giving back to the community, yet the percentage of blood donors has remained at 1.7 per cent to 1.8 per cent of the residential population, noted the Singapore Red Cross (SRC).

It has observed that the number of young blood donors aged 16 to 25 in the country has been declining, and this is a worrying trend.

The numbers have fallen by 36 per cent in the past decade, from 21,793 in 2011 to 13,967 last year. In

addition, the pandemic has resulted in fewer donations.

SRC said about 600 donors drop out each year due to age or illnesses but blood usage continues to increase every year.

Each year, about 30,000 people require blood transfusions. This means that SRC needs to maintain a steady pool of donors for a stable and sustainable blood supply in the future, including getting more young people to start donating regularly and make it a lifelong habit.

Its chief executive Benjamin William said: "Blood donation is a responsibility of all of us. Even if you are not able to donate for one



Project Blood SG, spearheaded by university students Tan Boyi (far left) and Marie Tan and the Singapore Red Cross, serves as a platform for young people to volunteer and organise blood drives.

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PROJECT
BLOOD SG

reason or another, you can support the national blood donor programme by spreading the word and encouraging others to donate."

National University of Singapore undergraduates Marie Tan, 21, and Tan Boyi, 23, are lending a helping hand, with their Project Blood SG, the first student-led initiative since 2019. They had just completed their A levels then and

wanted to donate blood after coming across a media appeal. After conducting research and realising they could support the cause by being blood drive organisers, they approached SRC to ask for support.

Spearheaded by the students and SRC, Project Blood SG serves as a platform for young people to volunteer and organise biannual blood drives, as well as to raise

awareness about donation.

The SRC has flagged misconceptions that may deter potential donors from giving blood. These include catching diseases from doing so, not having enough blood left in the body, and blood withdrawal being painful.

In line with World Blood Donor Day, Project Blood SG is organising its fifth drive on Saturday at Cheng San Community Club in Ang Mo Kio. It will be held from 10am to 4pm, and donors are encouraged to book a time slot by calling 6220-0183 or sign up via <https://tinyurl.com/CSCCBloodDriveJune22>.

Project Blood SG has organised blood drives through the pandemic. To date, its four drives have drawn 486 attendees.

Ms Ng Si Yi, 21, a regular donor, feels motivated knowing that her blood can help save lives. The Nanyang Technological University undergraduate said: "I feel a sense of accomplishment after each donation, and it makes me really

happy to be able to lend a helping hand to others."

From a two-man effort when Project Blood SG started in December 2019, the initiative has expanded to a 19-strong team today, with the volunteers in their 20s. They hope to tap more volunteers. Educational talks have been held in schools, which have also tied up for blood drives.

To reach out to young people, an Instagram page @projectbloodsg was created. The team also hopes to improve its Telegram bot @projectbloodsgbot, which answers questions and provides information on blood donation.

"I think the most rewarding experience was when I met one of the blood beneficiaries and she was very thankful," Ms Marie Tan said.

"After she told me about her experience, I was glad that I started the blood drives because we could help people like her, who need blood transfusions regularly."

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