



National Headquarters
431 18th Street NW
Washington, DC 20006
redcross.org

News Release

NEWS RELEASE

American Red Cross Contact:
Jessa Merrill
Telephone: (202) 303-5987

SCDAA Contact:
Carole Bernard
Telephone (410) 528-1555 (o);
(443) 538-1565 (c)
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The American Red Cross, Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, Inc. and the Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia, Inc. on National Blood Drives Initiative

The new partnership expands education and outreach efforts to increase blood donations among African-American populations

(October 9, 2018 – WASHINGTON, DC) The American Red Cross, the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, Inc. and the Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia, Inc. announced a new five-year partnership today, as well as a national blood drive and educational campaign that will enhance awareness about sickle cell disease while addressing critical blood supply needs. This initiative will also target African-American blood donors and highlight the need for a stable supply of blood donors of African descent. Through collaboration with community-based organizations, advocacy groups, colleges and universities, hospitals, and others, this partnership will help ensure patients have access to lifesaving blood products.

The annual goal of the campaign is to mobilize 100 blood drives (with a minimum of 30 units collected per drive) targeting African-American donors across the nation. Over the five-year partnership, it is anticipated that upwards of 15,000 blood donations will be made, helping to save thousands of lives.

“The Red Cross is proud to partner with the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America and the Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia,” said Vincent Edwards, national director of Red Cross Blood Services. “A diverse blood supply is critical to being able to help all patients in need. Blood from people of a similar race and ethnicity as a patient can provide the best health outcomes and fewer complications from a transfusion.”

Sickle cell disease is a global health problem affecting millions of people around the world. It is an inherited blood disorder which can cause red blood cells to change from a normal round, soft blood cell to a sticky, hard, sickled shaped blood cell under certain stressors. These abnormal blood cells can stick together and block blood flow and oxygen causing pain, tissue and organ damage, acute anemia and even strokes. It is estimated that approximately 100,000 people in the U.S. have the disease – of whom 90 percent are of African descent. Each year, approximately 1,000 babies in the United States are born with sickle cell disease. There is currently no universal cure for this life-threatening disease.

“The Sickle Cell Disease Association of America is excited about this new partnership and the impact it can have on saving lives,” said SCDAA President and CEO Beverley Francis-Gibson. “We know that every two seconds, someone in the United States needs blood. Individuals living with a chronic illness, like sickle cell disease, are especially in need of blood transfusions and donated blood. This unique partnership will provide new opportunities for the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, the Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia and the Red Cross to not only inform and educate the public about sickle cell disease and the sickle cell trait, but also to activate and engage the African-American community about the immense importance of donating blood.”

Blood Facts

- Approximately 36,000 units of red blood cells are needed every day in the U.S.
- Nearly 7,000 units of platelets and 10,000 units of plasma are needed daily in the U.S.
- Nearly 21 million blood components are transfused each year in the U.S.
- The average red blood cell transfusion is approximately 3 units.
- The blood type most often requested by hospitals is type O.

“African-American people who require blood transfusions from being injured or ill – including those with sickle cell disease – all depend on a stable blood supply and ideally, blood that closely matches their own,” explained SCFG President and CEO Deb McGhee McCrary. “This is why it is important for African-Americans to donate and receive blood from other African-Americans.”

About the American Red Cross

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit redcross.org or cruzrojaamericana.org, or visit us on Twitter at [@RedCross](https://twitter.com/RedCross).

About SCDAA

The Sickle Cell Disease Association of America's mission is: To advocate for people affected by sickle cell conditions and empower community-based organizations to maximize quality of life and raise public consciousness while advancing the search for a universal cure. Visit sicklecelldisease.org for more information.

About SCFG

The Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia is one of the oldest sickle cell-focused institutions in the nation. Our mission is to reduce the incidence of sickle cell disease, to monitor the prevalence of sickle cell and to help improve the quality of life for persons afflicted with the disease. To achieve our directives, the Foundation sponsors educational programs, conducts sickle cell trait testing, counsels families, supports healthcare providers and coordinates activities that benefit patients throughout the year.

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