

# SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

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Residents waiting to give blood listen to Legislator William R. Spencer, M.D. discuss the critical need for donations at this time

## **Community Unites with Legislator Spencer to Save Lives During Record Low Blood Shortage**

**Centerport, NY** - In response to the blood shortage that the Long Island region has been experiencing this summer, Suffolk County Legislator William R. Spencer, M.D. joined forces with the Centerport Fire Department and New York Blood Center on Thursday, July 21, 2016 to host an emergency blood drive to help replenish our local blood supply. The drive was a huge success, doubling the initial goal of 40 donations and collecting 83 pints of blood for those in need.

"Thank you to all who came out to donate, the Centerport Fire Department for hosting us, and the phlebotomists, staff, and volunteers from the New York Blood Center who helped to make our blood drive so successful last week," said Legislator Spencer. "The community's response to our call to action was overwhelming and because of their kindness, we were able to collect enough blood to save up to 249 lives!"

In just New York and New Jersey alone, 2,000 donations are needed every day to keep our hospitals sufficiently stocked. When blood is donated, it takes a minimum of 48 hours to reach a patient as it must be typed, separated, and tested before it can be released to hospitals. The universal blood type O negative, which is only 6% of the population, is greatly needed at this time as that blood is largely used in emergency situations since it can go to any patient.

“Legislator Spencer’s first ever community blood drive was an amazing success!” said Sue Lingenfelter, Business Development Manager from the New York Blood Center. “We are still in the midst of a declared blood emergency and these 83 pints will go a long way in helping us meet the tremendous need of hospitals across Long Island. The community should be really proud!”

With schools being recessed for break and many residents on vacation, the summer months are typically low for blood donations. This year however, we have seen unusually low donations both nationally and locally through April and May and now into the summer months. This reflects an alarming drop off in community blood donations which prompted a blood emergency to be declared. These seasonal factors as well as the spread of the Zika Virus across Central and South America are thought to be main contributors to the blood shortage. Measures to guard against exposure and transmission of the virus has diminished supply, as blood centers and hospitals are requiring a 28 day deferral for all donors who have traveled to countries where Zika is prevalent. Our blood centers have also been supplying blood to areas such as Puerto Rico where residents currently cannot donate blood for preventative purposes.

If you cannot donate but still wish to participate in bringing crucial blood products to patients in need, please ask someone to donate for you, or consider volunteering at an upcoming local blood drive. **Any company, community organization, place of worship, or individual may host a blood drive.** Blood donors receive free mini-medical exams on site including information about their temperature, blood pressure and hematocrit level. Eligible donors must be between 17 and 75 (or 16 with parental consent and over 75 with a doctor’s note), weigh at least 110 pounds, be feeling “in good health” on the day of donation, and meet all Food & Drug Administration and NY or NJ State Department of Health donor criteria.

**To donate blood or for information on how to organize a blood drive,  
please call 1-800-933-2566 or Visit [www.nybloodcenter.org/blood](http://www.nybloodcenter.org/blood)**