

Giving the gift of life

By Anita DeVries

Giving the gift of life is reward enough for Robert MacDonald. However, the Canadian Blood Services wanted to honour him anyway for giving blood 100 times.

The special awards ceremony was held at the Toronto City Hall on May 1, complete with a buffet dinner, inspirational speeches and people from all walks of life.

MacDonald started giving blood when he was 18. His high school in Courtice, was having a competition with Clarke and Bowmanville to see what school could donate the most blood. He wasn't going to participate, because he recently had surgery, but a girl he knew said, 'you have to do this, as long as you attempt to give, it counts!'

They allowed him to give blood. He was surprised at how simple the procedure was but totally unprepared for the immense feeling of satisfaction he received from knowing he did something for someone else.

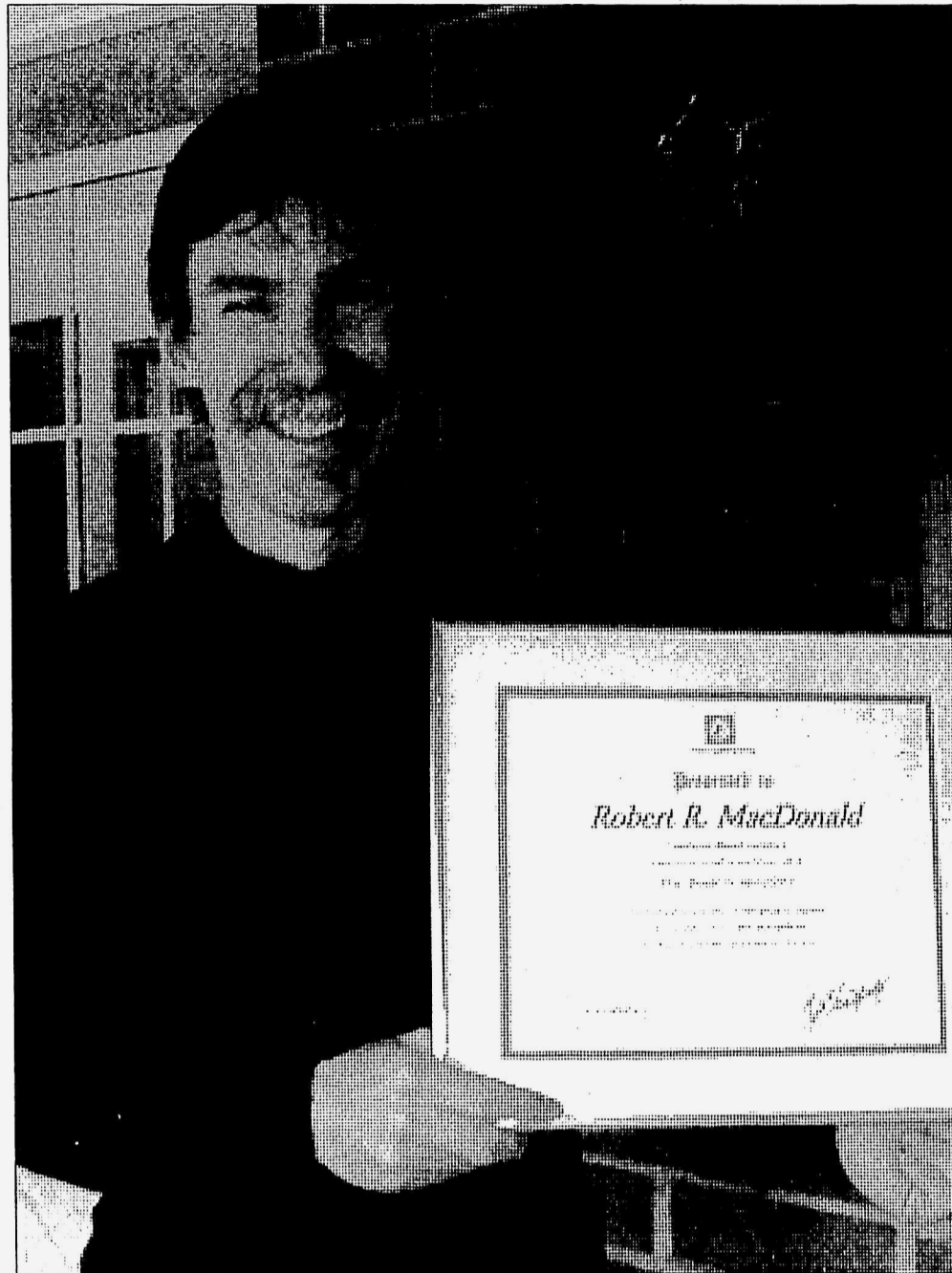
"I felt like I did more for me than the person who received my blood," said MacDonald.

Since then the lanky, good-natured man has not missed a year. One time he even had to wait two hours in line to donate when there was an acute shortage of blood.

He tries to go in the summer, because generally there is a shortage of donors during that season. Even though he doesn't get "as big a charge" from giving as he used to, it still makes him feel good to give—especially when he hears the stories of people who have been helped by the blood he donates.

"A speaker in Toronto gave a moving story of how his sister's life was prolonged due to blood donations," said MacDonald. "There were people with tears in their eyes as they listened."

MacDonald has two sons, Kyle and Garrett, whom he has taken along with him on numerous occasions when he has given blood. The



Robert Macdonald of Orono displays the plaque bestowed upon him May 1st by Canadian Blood Services after giving blood for the 100th time.

boys would sit on his cot, and were treated with cookies from the girl guides. "This left a lasting impression on my youngest son," said MacDonald. "He can't wait until he can give blood too." Kyle, the older boy, gave blood for the first time when his dad gave for the 99th time.

The plaque MacDonald received states, "Your loyalty places you among a select group of Canadians who give of themselves so that others may live. Hundreds of Canadians owe their life and health to you."

Since 2001 the Canadian Blood Services have extended a special challenge to Canadians to collect 1 million units of blood annually by 2005. This requires an increase in donors from the current 3.5% of eligible donors to 5%. This past year they received 810,000 units of blood.

Due to the fear of West Nile Disease CBS is trying to stockpile red blood cells before mosquito season begins. Last year health professionals found that the disease can be transmitted through blood transfusions,

so CBS is working with Health Canada to make a screening test, which Derek Mellon, media relations manager for CBS, says they hope to have out by July 1st.

CBS runs all blood through leukoreduction, a method of filtering out white blood cells from donated blood. A major nationwide study, recently completed found that leukoreduced blood results in fewer fevers and decreased antibiotic use in high-risk patients.

CBS is always in need of blood as blood products have a limited shelf life: platelets last 5 days, red blood cells 42 days, fresh frozen plasma 1 year, and source plasma 10 years.

The Canadian Blood Services is a national, not-for-profit organization, with 40 permanent sites and more than 10,000 donor clinics annually. It also operates the Bone Marrow Registry.

There will be a blood donor clinic at the Newcastle Town Hall, 20 King Street West on May 27th and July 22nd, from 3:30 - 7:30.

Word on the Streets

by Anita DeVries

With blood supplies constantly in demand, and so few donors, Orono Times went to the streets to find out why or why not people give blood, and whether they trust Canada's blood supply. Here's what you said:



Bradley MacArthur, Orono resident - "I used to give blood, but I haven't given in a while. I think I would be leery of receiving blood because of the unknown, ignorance of the system, I guess. Once fear is instilled in people, because of tainted blood scandals, the validity of the system comes under question. That's just being honest."



Terri Knight, Orono - "No, because I have a bone disease. I have received blood though. I just thank people for giving blood—without it, I wouldn't be here."



Donna Robertson from Newcastle - "Yes, I've given blood before. They should have an area in the mall so it's convenient for people to give blood. I wouldn't worry about receiving blood. I think they are really cautious now about whose blood they take, and they test it."



Ken Campbell, Orono resident - "No, I've never given blood. I just have never done it, but I wouldn't be afraid of receiving blood."



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