

DCMA Bostonian Steps up to the Plate(let)

by Mr. Larry Vallas, Quality Assurance Representative, DCMA Boston

His family and peers consider DCMA Bostonian Mr. Michael “Mike” Hession a humble humanitarian. For the past nine years, the Ground Combat Systems Team contract administrator with 28 years of federal service has been donating blood platelets to Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). Mr. Hession had been a blood donor for many years, when in 1996 he read about the uses of and demands for the lesser-advertised blood platelets, which are integral for patients suffering from leukemia, hemophilia, cancer and aplastic and sickle cell anemia and for those who undergo chemotherapy and surgery. After researching the importance of blood platelets, Mr. Hession decided to “step up” his personal quest to help those in dire need.



Platelets are collected through a process called apheresis, during which blood is withdrawn from a donor’s arm, passed through a sterile tubing system and then centrifugally separated and collected into a unit of clots. The remaining blood components are returned into the body via the donor’s other arm. The entire platelet donation process takes approximately two hours. Since the donor hasn’t essentially lost any blood, platelet donors can safely donate every three days (but only up to 24 times a year).

Mr. Hession, whom doctors say has been blessed with a high platelet count, makes platelet

donations approximately 16 times per year. He also wants to encourage others to donate and urges people to visit their local Red Cross for more information on how they can help. It is estimated that less than 5 percent of the U.S. population donates blood platelets on a regular basis. Consequently, the American Red Cross and hospitals around the country are constantly seeking blood donors in an effort to keep the low on-hand supply of blood ahead of the high demand. The platelet donation process is painless, and medical staff ensure that the comfort of donors is of utmost priority. Donors can recline in a chair and read a book, listen to music or watch television or a DVD to make their donation visits pleasant and relaxing.

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For donating so much of his time and himself, Mr. Hession has earned the admiration of his wife Christina, daughter Alison and all of his peers.

He has received several letters of appreciation from the MGH staff as well. What drives Mr. Hession to continue his quest to help others in need, and what he finds to be most rewarding, are the thank-you cards he receives from the patients he has helped — especially the children.

For more information on donating blood and platelets, visit the blood donation page of the American Red Cross Web site at <http://www.givelife.org/>.

(Above) Mr. Mike Hession, contract administrator, DCMA Boston, regularly donates blood platelets. (DCMA staff photo)

(Right) Blood in a test tube (foreground) and blood platelets under a microscope.

