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SERVICES

PLACE: Blood Challenge, Washington, D.C.

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Give Thanks, Give Life, Give Twice: The Need for Blood Donation

Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you so very much for coming today. I'm glad to be here with all of you to celebrate the launch of a promising new initiative to increase blood donation and permanently increase our blood supply.

It's good to see Jim MacPherson here today. We all appreciate the tireless work you're doing as CEO of America's Blood Centers. I'm glad to see Karen Shoos Lipton as well, and I thank her for all her support as CEO of the American Association of Blood Banks. I'd also like to welcome Marty Evans, President and CEO of the American Red Cross. And I'm especially proud to introduce Lauren Larsen, who will speak to you in just a moment about her wonderful story as a blood recipient.

I'd like to begin by thanking all of our important partners in this effort, and I greatly appreciate all of you coming here today.

For many years, I've been passionate about promoting blood donation. When I was Governor of Wisconsin, we led the Governor's Challenge, an initiative that resulted in a record increase of blood donations for the state. Unfortunately, our nation regularly faces blood shortages. In times of great need, many people donate, as we saw after September 11th. But our friends, families, and neighbors need blood donations year round. As we in the Administration take steps to increase national preparedness, we must address these concerns, with determination and focus.

That's exactly what we're doing here today, by launching a new challenge campaign to encourage every Federal employee to become a regular blood donor. The goal of this new campaign - "Give Thanks! Give Life! Give Twice!" - is to thank all of our regular volunteer blood donors, celebrate the gift of life they so generously make, and encourage every qualified donor to give blood twice a year, or more.

While sixty percent of Americans are qualified, currently only five percent donate blood. My friends, we can do better than that, and we will. We have the opportunity, in this Administration, to set an example for all Americans.

Today, I'm challenging all members of the President's cabinet and all Federal workers to give blood, create awareness of the need for blood donation, and hold regular blood drives in as many of your workplaces as possible.

I'm proud to say that the Office of Personnel Management is already assisting us in promoting the blood donation challenge across the Federal government, and Postmaster General Jack Potter is announcing today that he will meet my challenge. So we're already off to a good start.

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In the spring, we'll be expanding this initiative through the Workplace Partnership for Life to include state and local government and private sector employees. Joined with the help of Federal employees, we can achieve our goal of doubling the number of blood donors to ten percent of the population nationwide

Being a volunteer blood donor may not get your name in the newspaper, or your face on television - but in my book, it still makes you an American hero. Volunteer donors currently provide lifesaving blood to over 4.5 million of their friends and neighbors every year - that's millions of lives made different because someone stopped to donate blood.

It was on this day in 1944 that Winston Churchill spoke in Albert Hall to the British troops, and told them to give thanks, even in a time of great trouble. "We are joined together," he reminded them, "shedding our blood side by side, struggling for the same ideals, until the triumph of the great causes which we serve shall be made manifest... Then, indeed, there will be a Day of Thanksgiving, one in which all the world will share."

Today, I'm asking men and women to join together - not to shed blood, but to give it as a free gift, no strings attached. It may seem like a small sacrifice right now. It may seem like one more person giving blood won't change the world. But I promise you that somewhere across this nation, there is one less empty chair at a Thanksgiving table because someone stopped to give that small sacrifice. And that is truly something to be thankful for.

Now, I'd like to introduce Lauren Ward Larsen, a blood recipient who is going to tell us her story.

Thank you so much for your inspiring words, Lauren. I'd now like to introduce Jim MacPherson, CEO of America's Blood Centers, the nation's largest provider of blood products and services.

Now I'd like to introduce Karen Shoos Lipton, CEO of the American Association of Blood Banks and a leader for us all.

It's my pleasure to introduce Marty Evans, who has had an impressive career as a U.S. Navy Rear Admiral, Executive Director of the Red Cross, a White House Fellow and now President of the Red Cross.

Thank you all for coming. May God bless you all.