

Everyday Heroes

Blood Centers of the Pacific's Diversity E-newsletter

December 2011

Happiest of holidays to you and your loved ones! In the words of poet and historian Dr. Maya Angelou, from her Christmas poem entitled [Amazing Peace](#):

We clap hands and welcome the Peace of Christmas.
We beckon this good season to wait a while with us.
We, Baptist and Buddhist, Methodist and Muslim, say come.
Peace.
Come and fill us and our world with your majesty.
We, the Jew and the Jainist, the Catholic and the Confucian,
Implore you, to stay a while with us.
So we may learn by your shimmering light
How to look beyond complexion and see community.

Peace, My Brother.
Peace, My Sister.
Peace, My Soul.

On behalf of those patients whose lives were touched by your gift of life, we thank you for donating blood. Season's Greetings from all of us at [Blood Centers of the Pacific](#)!

Helping the Helper



With a history of helping the community, it comes as no surprise that Karyl Eckels works in the City of Oakland's Department of Human Services. As Senior Services Supervisor with the [Multipurpose Senior Services Program](#) (MSSP), Karyl and her team help seniors to remain safe and independent in their own homes. The ability to help people in need allows this Oakland native to give back to the community where she has lived for six decades. But sometimes even a helper like Karyl needs support from others. As an African-American person with [rare blood](#) who occasionally needs blood transfusions, other African-Americans are needed to help this helper.

At age 19, after a miscarriage, Karyl was incorrectly diagnosed with the [sickle cell trait](#). She realized her continued hemorrhaging after the miscarriage, which required her to have a blood transfusion, could not be explained by the trait diagnosis. Was the doctor

wrong? Eventually, two factors led to Karyl (pictured with her granddaughter who has the C Trait) correctly being diagnosed with [sickle-hemoglobin C disease](#). First, she learned more about the disease through the public service efforts of the [Black Panthers](#) and their campaign to bring greater awareness to the plight of sickle cell patients. Additionally, she would have another pregnancy, again with complications, but this time it would result in the birth of her son.

As a young woman growing up in Oakland, Karyl heard the rally cries of the Black Panther Party (BPP) and was intrigued by the issues the group brought to the public's attention. Founded in Oakland in 1966, the BPP was a product of the civil rights movement. Huey Newton and other Panther leaders put in place a [Ten-Point Plan](#) that would encompass the group's agenda. The goal of the health component of the plan, point number 6, was to bring "health education and research programs" to the African-American community. Sickle cell disease was identified as a critical health issue for the African-American community. In 1970, this led to the founding of the Party's Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation at [Children's Hospital Research Center Oakland](#). The BPP encouraged members of the African-American community to get trait testing and to donate blood to help people with sickle cell disease. Children's now has an internationally-renowned sickle cell program and is home to a national center treating more than 500 kids and adults with the disease annually.

Karyl's only child, Bill, was born Christmas Day, 35years ago at Alta Bates Hospital. Delivered by C-section, health issues with both mother and son kept the two apart for the first eight days

of Bill's life. Bill was transferred to Children's where the medical staff could better care for him. Doctors asked for more blood work from Karyl to see if they could find what might be the problem with Bill. It was at this point that Karyl was accurately diagnosed with sickle-hemoglobin C disease. Bill, fortunately, was not born with the disease but does have C trait. Within days of his birth, both Bill and Karyl needed transfusions. Again, doctors had a hard time finding blood that was a match for Karyl.

Today, Karyl is the proud grandmother to Bill's daughters Rai, 12, with C trait, and Javen, 7. She has learned a great deal about sickle cell disease and trait. Karyl has taken the California Sickle Cell Certification Training so that she can speak with knowledge on the subject. She credits her primary physician, Dr. Robert A. Johnson for his care, compassion, and commitment to sickle cell patients. In the last 20 years, Karyl has experienced several sickle cell crises. Each time her doctor has recommended transfusions as a way to alleviate the pain and suffering. Unfortunately, that's easier said than done in Karyl's case. Because of the rare traits in her blood, combined with the shortage of African-American donors, it is a challenge to find enough units of blood to meet her transfusion needs.

Karyl is often left asking "How do I get other African-Americans to donate blood?" Hopefully, in time there will be enough African-American donors to meet the blood needs of all sickle cell and other patients in our community. Today, there is not enough donors, less than 3 percent are African-American, but you can help bridge the gap. Donate blood this holiday season and commit to donate on a regular basis. Helpers like Karyl need you.

Saving Lives at a Blood Drive Near You!

Save lives by donating blood at one of these community-sponsored blood drives or at any of our [center locations](#).

1) African American Community Health Advisory Committee

Saturday, December 3, 2011

9am- 2pm

San Francisco Airport Marriott Hotel

Location: Anaheim Room - 1800 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, 94010

For Appointments Click [HERE](#)

2) Abundant Life Christian Fellowship, 2440 Leghorn Street, Mountain View, 94043

Sunday, December 4, 2011

9am- 2pm

Location: Bloodmobile in front of church

For Appointments Click [HERE](#)

3) Missionary Church of God in Christ, 1125 Allston Way, Berkeley, 94702

Saturday, December 10, 2011

11am- 4pm

Location: Bloodmobile in front of church

For Appointments Click [HERE](#)

4) McClymonds High School, 2607 Myrtle Street, Oakland, 94607

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

9:30am- 2:30pm

Location: Gymnasium

For Appointments Click [HERE](#)

5) Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church, 6190 Third Street, San Francisco, 94124

Sunday, December 18, 2011

9am- 2pm

Location: Bloodmobile in front of church

For Appointments Click [HERE](#)

6) True Hope Church of God in Christ, 950 Gilman Avenue, San Francisco, 94124

Sunday, December 18, 2011

9am- 2pm

Location: Bloodmobile in front of church

For Appointments Click [HERE](#)



Donate Blood. Save Lives. | 1-888-393-GIVE | www.bloodcenters.org

