

**Speech for Ms Tan Poh Hong, Vice Chairperson, Singapore Red Cross
At World Blood Donor Day at the Singapore Expo Hall 4
On 17 June 2023, at 10 am**

Our Guest-of-Honour, Ong Ye Kung, the Minister for Health
Professor Benjamin Ong, Chairman, Health Sciences Authority
Dr Mimi Choong, CEO, Health Sciences Authority
Mr Benjamin William, Secretary General/CEO, Singapore Red Cross

Blood Donors and Families

Partners and Volunteers

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning and a warm welcome to the World Blood Donor Day celebrations. On this special occasion, we recognise the selfless contributions of all blood donors, and the partners of the National Blood Programme. Each one of you has played a critical role in saving lives in our community.

On behalf of the Singapore Red Cross and our service partner, the Health Sciences Authority, I would like to congratulate our Champion Blood Donors on achieving your significant donation milestones. Your decision to prioritise blood donation amidst your busy schedule and personal commitments, has given life to many. Family and friends, please join me in giving our blood donors and lifesavers a round of applause.

I would also like to thank Minister Ong for gracing this event as our Guest-of-Honour. Minister, himself, as you know, is an avid blood donation advocate, and we are honoured by his presence today, Minister.

Honouring our Blood Champions

World Blood Donor Day is commemorated around the world to pay tribute to the millions of unsung heroes who save lives daily. This year's World Blood Donor Day theme, 'Everyday Heroes - Ordinary People, Extraordinary Impact', is a powerful reminder of the extraordinary impact that our blood donors make in the community. Not only have you given the gift of life to patients who need transfusion, you are also the beacon of hope and strength for their grateful families.

14 years ago, we launched the Medal for Life Award and honoured the first blood donor who made 200 donations. I am happy to announce that today, 22 champion blood donors will receive this recognition. They are amongst 466 donors who will receive awards this morning, and 1,410 who will receive awards in the afternoon.

Today, we also recognise and celebrate the exceptional contributions of our Blood Mobile Organisers, who play a crucial role in facilitating blood donation, in making it more accessible and convenient for our donors. As our esteemed community partners, they provide us with access to their networks and their resources, enhancing the success and effectiveness of our blood drives.

Besides organising blood mobiles and group donations at the blood banks, our partners also volunteer their employees' skills towards this national cause. In addition to managing the logistics of blood collection, they are instrumental in promoting awareness on the significance of blood donation, as well as rallying and recruiting people to donate blood.

Their passion and dedication toward blood donation make them true champions of this lifesaving cause. I thank all our partners for their tireless efforts, which helped us to achieve a 20 percent increase in the number of bloodmobile drives last year.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with you, to explore new avenues for community engagement and advocacy, and to save lives through blood donation.

Engaging Youth Blood Donors

Last year, despite a 7 percent increase in the total number of blood donors, the number of youth blood donors fell by 10 percent. This decline is a grave concern, considering Singapore's ageing population and the increasing demand for sophisticated medical procedures that require blood transfusions.

Every year, 600 blood donors stop donating blood because of age or illness, making the role of youth donors even more critical.

The Singapore Red Cross is working closely with schools and community groups to organise roadshows and learning journeys to the Bloodbanks, to provide opportunities for youth to learn more about blood donation. The team is also developing trendy social media content and activities to sync blood donation with the lifestyle of young people; and leverage the synergies such as the Red Cross Youth, to help build a more robust pool of youth donors.

We will also introduce a brand new award, the "YOUTHphoria Award" to recognise the exemplary efforts of youth blood donors, and to encourage more young people to donate blood regularly. We are hopeful that our efforts will inspire a new generation of blood donors, to secure a sustainable blood supply for the future.

Everyday Heroes Advocating Blood Donation

The blood donors and blood drive partners we are honouring today are heroes who help to ensure a safe and sufficient supply of blood in Singapore. However, it is important to recognise that blood donors represent a small fraction, just 1.8 percent, of Singapore's residential population, who bear the responsibility of meeting the blood needs of the entire nation.

It is imperative that we strengthen our resilience as a nation; and increasing the blood donor pool, which is a crucial step toward this goal. This would ensure that blood is available when it is needed most, strengthening our resilience against emergencies, crises and pandemic.

The gift of your blood also sustains patients with medical conditions during peacetime, making Singapore a safer and more secure place for all of us.

There is still much we have to do to inculcate the lifestyle of blood donation in our community, and the belief that blood donation should be an integral part of our nation's psyche. Our success will depend on whether we can continue to motivate blood donors to step forward, and encourage existing donors to continue giving blood regularly.

To our blood heroes here today - Your commitment to this cause is an inspiration to us all. Your donation is your legacy, and you are the best ambassadors for blood donation. We hope you will continue to share your positive experience with your networks, and help us to build a community with the shared purpose of giving blood to save lives. Start by downloading the DonateBlood App, sharing blood donation information, and bringing someone along when you give blood. Together, we can create a culture of blood donation that will ensure a sustainable blood supply for the future.

Conclusion

In closing, on behalf of Singapore Red Cross and Health Sciences Authority, I would like to thank you, our champion blood donors and partners, for your presence here today, and for your enduring support. Even as we celebrate your donation milestones today, let us work together to inspire the next generation of donors to embark on this fulfilling journey. We want to partner you to make blood donation a way of life, to create a more resilient community for ourselves and for generations to come.

I wish you a meaningful and enjoyable day ahead.

Happy World Blood Donor Day!