

Local & business

Rail project puts stress on blood supply

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The Blood Bank of Hawaii is encouraging the public to give blood after losing 30 percent of its Dillingham Boulevard location's donors following that collection site's closure last year.

Since the local nonprofit closed blood collections from its Dillingham headquarters due to pending rail construction, 70 percent of its regular donors have found new donor locations, but 30 percent — more than 2,000 people — have not, according to Todd Lewis, chief operating officer of the Blood Bank of Hawaii.

"Our donor-center donors donate more frequently than our blood mobile or our mobile donors do," said Maura Dolormente, director of public relations for the Blood Bank of Hawaii. "So it's not only the number of donors, the frequency is higher than



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Rose Marie Wilson, left, a blood recipient and donor, pals around with Maura Dolormente, director of public relations for the Blood Bank of Hawaii.

people that donate out at mobile blood drives."

"We have had to import blood from the mainland over the last year and a half to meet Hawaii's patients' needs," Dolormente said. The loss becomes "quite significant" during the summer when donor turnout is traditionally low, she

added.

While about 70 percent of the state's blood supply is now being collected by blood mobiles, Lewis said this new business model is difficult to sustain due to the high cost of mobile operations.

Dolormente and Lewis spoke Wednesday at the

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Now I get to donate and I do it because I can. You know nobody promises us tomorrow, and all I remember is getting blood for my mom and then I end up needing blood.”

Rose Marie Wilson
Blood donor

Blood Bank's Young Street site in McCully as they marked World Blood Donor Day. This year's event was held in partnership with the World Health Organization and focused on blood donation in emergencies.

"Our mantra is, 'It's the

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blood on the shelves that saves lives," said Dolormente. "So World Blood Donor Day is a great opportunity to generate awareness about that need for blood is every single day but it's also a great time to thank Hawaii's donors."

At Wednesday's event, Rose Marie Wilson said her involvement with the Blood Bank of Hawaii began at 12 years old after her mother was hospitalized with bleeding ulcers. That same day she was assigned to contact family and friends for blood donations.

However, the following day, Wilson found herself hospitalized with a hemorrhage.

"Here I am thinking that I'm saving my mom and then what happens is that I end up needing blood," said Wilson.

"For the next 38 years I had good days, good months, good years, sometimes I would be totally fine and then sometimes I would totally hemorrhage," she added. "I remember the worst I had was in my late 30s when I needed 27 pints of blood in 21 days."

Doctors were unable to diagnose Wilson's condition, but after having surgery more than 30 years later, she is now able to thank her donors by giving back.

"Now I get to donate and I do it because I can," said Wilson. "You know nobody promises us tomorrow and all I remember is getting blood for my mom and then I end up needing blood."

Blood Bank of Hawaii officials say they provide blood products to 18 hospitals statewide. For more information on the Blood Bank of Hawaii or to find a donor center visit bbh.org.