

VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Eastern Colorado Health Care System**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
April 21, 2022**Media Release**
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:Dustin Senger, Deputy Public Affairs Officer
719-373-3251 (Cell phone)vhaechcommunications@va.gov**VA Eastern Colorado asks 100 to enlist in fight against blood shortage**

AURORA, Colo. – With VA extending its “Roll Up Your Sleeve” campaign, VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System (ECHCS) is asking 100 volunteers to join the fight against a shortage of lifesaving blood.

VA facilities nationwide are continuing to partner with collection agencies to host blood drives and encourage donations. With blood shortages remaining a serious concern, replenishing the national supply is critical to VA efforts to provide timely, quality health care to Veterans.

In continued partnership with Vitalant, Rocky Mountain Regional (RMR) VA Medical Center will park a bloodmobile April 27 at DoubleTree Hotel in Denver, as the VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) kicks off its 76th National Advisory Committee meeting.

“Make your lifesaving pledge today, as part of honoring National Volunteer Week,” said Eva Gergely, VA ECHCS CDCE chief, who is coordinating collection sites with Vitalant. “We’re celebrating the volunteers who serve in our facilities to meet the critical needs of Veterans.”

Medical facilities depend on 33,000 blood donations every day to meet patient needs, according to America’s Blood Centers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, thousands of regularly scheduled blood drives were cancelled. VA’s “fourth mission” calls for backing up the nation’s health care systems in times of disaster.

Volunteer donors are the only source of the blood needed to treat trauma and chronic illness, inside and outside VA health care systems. Veterans, along with their family members and friends, are encouraged to sign up now with Vitalant, then share their blood donations on social media with the hashtag #RollUpYourSleeveVA.

‘100 opportunities to save lives’

“We’ve got 100 opportunities to save lives coming up in VA Eastern Colorado,” said Gergely, referring to appointments available through June. After the bloodmobile April 27 in Denver, a drive will take place May 5 at RMR VA Medical Center in Aurora, then June 16 at PFC Floyd K. Lindstrom VA Clinic in Colorado Springs.

“Together, we can make a difference,” says Gergely. “We look forward to everyone sharing their health and rolling up their sleeves.”

More than 100 volunteer donors previously registered for events Feb. 3 and March 2 at RMR VA Medical Center in Aurora and 25 were first-time donors, according to Vitalant. Dozens sent online pledges to support VA ECHCS efforts by donating at any convenient location.

Vitalant, founded in 1943, manages a national network of about 120 donation centers. The nonprofit blood services provider equips collection sites with the procedures, furnishings and supplies needed to help keep donors and staff healthy and safe.

Jennifer Heilveil, a recreation therapist for Veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders, gave in February at the medical center. An enthusiasm was born with her twins, as she nearly needed a transfusion. Knowing her blood type is in demand, she's now donated several times.

"Giving blood gets a little easier each time—I just try to stay relaxed," said Heilveil. "The Vitalant team is great at keeping everyone at ease through the experience, whether it's a first donation or sixth. But it's always helpful to eat a good breakfast and drink lots of water."

Healthy individuals can make an online pledge with VA ECHCS at Northeast.Vitalant.org/pledge?drive_code=DEN5720&division=MOUNTAIN%26%25region=DEN.

Would-be donors can search for convenient locations across Colorado and other states at Vitalant.org. To participate at RMR VA Medical Center, search for blood drive code 5720. To join at PFC Floyd K. Lindstrom VA Clinic, search for A950.

For information on blood donation and donor eligibility [visit Vitalant.org/donate/donor-eligibility](https://Vitalant.org/donate/donor-eligibility).

VA ECHCS 'Roll Up Your Sleeve' Blood Drive

When: Wednesday, April 27, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

What: Respond to an ongoing need across the country by making an appointment to donate in a blood mobile hosted by Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center.

Who: Healthy and eligible blood donors.

Where: DoubleTree Hotel
3203 Quebec Street
Denver, CO 80207

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Attached Photo



220203-001 – Jennifer Heilveil, a recreation therapist for Veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders, donates blood Feb. 3 at Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center in Aurora. VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System partners with Vitalant to host blood drives, where volunteers can contribute to ensuring a steady blood supply for patients throughout the country. (Courtesy Photo/VA Eastern Colorado Health

Care System)