Announcer: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap: Helping to save someone's life is as easy as donating blood. You'll have the opportunity to do this January 23-25, 2018, when Missouri State University hosts a blood drive on campus in honor of National Blood Donor month.

The event is jointly organized by Missouri State's Gamma Sigma Sigma and Community Blood Center of the Ozarks. I'm Emily Yeap.

Joining me today are Kenna Sheppard, Gamma Sigma Sigma president, and Brad Terry, Community Blood Center's senior blood drive consultant. Terry explains why blood donors are always needed.

Brad Terry: Community Blood Center serves 40 hospitals in 40 counties in southwest Missouri, and we need approximately 4,000 pints every month, which means every working day that we're open, we need about 225 pints to meet the need.

Emily Yeap: Blood donations typically dip during the winter months, so blood drives during this time are critical to prevent shortage.

Brad Terry: The blood drives that happen during the winter because if a storm system moves in, it can cancel blood drives for days at a time. So we have to make sure that the blood is already on the shelf, ready to be used, and it's already tested, ready to go to the hospital before that storm system can move in and freeze the blood drives out for two to three days at a time.

Blood has a shelf life that's 42 days. It doesn't keep any longer than that, so if we wait til we need it, and then a storm system moves in, sometimes it can be too late, so we have to have that blood on the shelf ready to go before something like that happens.

Emily Yeap: Sheppard shares more about the blood drive and what donors can expect.

Kenna Sheppard: The Community Blood Center of the Ozarks blood drive is one of our biggest events on campus each semester. We like to support it because it's a nice local commitment that can help improve the lives of so many in our area.

It's a pretty easy process. Basically, you just come in and bring your ID. The overall process will take about an hour, but it's pretty fun while you're there. Everyone's working giving blood. It's a good time. We have movies going. Part of our job, as volunteers, is to always give out pizza to the community members that come.

Emily Yeap: Donors who are in reasonable good health, and 16 years old with parent or guardian consent or 17 years old and above, can donate. They must also weigh a minimum of 110 pounds. At the blood drive, they will begin the process by completing a questionnaire. Sheppard explains.

Kenna Sheppard: Whenever community members come in to do the blood drive, they'll begin with the questionnaire process, which basically asks them health questions to know that their blood is eligible to be given so that way they don't get all the way through the process just to be turned away. That doesn't take very long at all.

And then after that, you'll go back with a nurse and check your iron levels, which sometimes can be lower for women. So if women want to eat some foods with iron before, that's always suggested, but once you see them, make sure all your levels are okay, you'll shortly wait, and then go get hooked up to give some blood.

Emily Yeap: The donor goal for each day is at least 250 people.

Brad Terry: We have to collect 225 every day to meet the need, so we need to see at least probably 250 to 275 to reach that because not everybody that tries to give can give.

So when we come to MSU, pretty much all of our eggs are in one basket there, so we're here for three days, and each day, we want to try to meet the entire daily goal while we're here.

Emily Yeap: Donors with O negative blood type are the most in demand.

Brad Terry: O negative blood type it's not the most rare kind. About six percent of the population has O negative blood, but it's the universal donor, so anybody can receive that type of blood.

So emergency rooms, ambulances, Medevac helicopters. Any time there's a trauma situation where there's not time to type the patient to see what kind of blood they have, they automatically start receiving O negative blood until they're stabilized.

So only six percent of the population has O negative, but it's transfused about 15 percent to 17 percent of the time, so it gets double duty. Plus, the people who have O negative blood, that's the only kind they can receive. So it's really important that that blood type is on the shelf.

We like to keep about a five- to seven-day supply. We frequently run into one- to three-day supply.

Emily Yeap: Those who are unsure about donating should still come by to the event.

Kenna Sheppard: Even if you're a student or a community member who kind of has a fear of needles or you’re not too sure about giving blood, go ahead and stop by. We can give you some flyers to pass out so you can still help the cause, or you're welcome to sit with Gamma Sigma Sigma at our table and volunteer with us so you can kind of see how the process is going to hold off that apprehension so maybe you can give blood in the future.

Emily Yeap: The blood drive takes places from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the Plaster Student Union Ballroom. All donors will receive a free T-shirt. For more information, contact Terry at 417-227-5394. I'm Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

Announcer: For more information, contact the Office of University Communications at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at KSMU.org