

May 2025, Edition 11

BLOOD STREAM

Newsletter

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NAMBTS
donate life





Editor's Note

20-20 THRIVE is already off to a very exciting start and we celebrate the arrival of the new year anticipating great things. We have been proactive in mitigating blood supply shortages with the upcoming public holidays and introduced Red Saturdays. Our most recent blood drive held in Oshakati, Swakopmund, Windhoek and Rehoboth saw us reaching our targeted interventions and we celebrated the 25 new donors who selflessly donated at our blood drives.

What warmed my heart was seeing the increasing numbers of parents teaching their children the importance of saving lives by donating together, especially at the coast and in the north. In this edition we acknowledge all the Namibians who give life to others through their heroic acts especially with the passing of the 88 year old Australian donor James Harrison who heroically saved more than 2 million babies as a life long donor because he had that magical antibody known as Anti-D.

We pay tribute to our the local donors who have collectively donated thousands of times because they care. Please make sure you share your donation stories as creatively as possible and enter our Blood Story Competition where there are fantastic cash prizes to be won. Also don't miss our May RED SATURDAY blood drive which will occur on 17 May 2025.

Lastly congratulations to Mr Israel Chipare who is appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of the Blood Transfusion Service effective 1 May 2025, and to Ms Marjolize Scholtz as Chairperson of the Board of Directors.

Zita Tobin (Manager : Marketing and Donor Relations)
Editor

AfSBT ACCREDITATION

Continuous improvement is at the heart of what we do at the Blood Transfusion Service (NamBTS), and we take pride in striving to maintain our accreditation status. The accreditation process serves to confirm that NamBTS meets the required standards and provides assurance to stakeholders, including donors, patients, clinicians and the public regarding the quality and safety of our services and, blood and blood products.

The Africa Society for Blood Transfusion (AfSBT) is an accrediting body that grants accreditation to blood services that meet international standards and conducted a comprehensive accreditation assessment from 04 to 14 March 2025 of all our departments in Windhoek, Swakopmund, Oshakati, Rundu, and Onandjokwe. The Onandjokwe blood bank underwent its initial assessment, while the other sites were reassessed during this period following the 2019 accreditation assessment. The results of the assessment reflected NamBTS's ongoing commitment to strengthening its quality management system, as no critical non-conformances were identified. However, the NamBTS team is currently addressing the identified minor deficiencies through corrective and preventive actions to further improve the quality management system and maintaining accreditation.

The AfSBT assessors commended the NamBTS staff for their professionalism, friendliness, and active engagement throughout the process. Achieving and maintaining quality and accreditation is a shared responsibility, and every staff member has contributed toward this goal. Kudos to the NamBTS team!

Story by: Lerato Khiba



Photo:
AfSBT auditors, SHEQ & Management team

Need-To-Knows about Iron and Blood Donation

Dr Carla van Zyl
Medical Officer at NAMBTS



How does blood donation affect my iron levels?

Your red blood cells are rich in haemoglobin which contains iron.

This means that if you donate red blood cells, you will lose iron.

If you donate a unit of whole blood you can lose between 200 - 250 mg of iron, which can potentially lead to iron deficiency.

Most donors have sufficient iron to donate blood safely. Frequent blood donations however, can in the presence of pre-existing low iron stores, a diet low in iron, or certain underlying medical conditions lead to iron deficiency.

How does NAMBTS monitor for iron deficiency in blood donors?

NAMBTS always does a haemoglobin finger-prick test before each donation which measures the amount of red blood cells, but does not measure iron. Therefore, ferritin (iron) testing has been introduced recently to measure the amount of iron in your body. A ferritin test is done at least once for every donor and thereafter based on the level and frequency of blood donations. Only a level above 6 ng/mL will be accepted for whole blood donation but ideally a level of 16 ng/mL or more is desired to ensure that a donor can safely donate blood. Double red cell donations require at least double these values.

How can low iron levels affect me?

A person with low iron can still feel normal, since there is still sufficient iron in the body to meet one's daily needs and make red blood cells. However, if all the iron in reserves has been used up, a person will be iron deficient and start to feel unwell.

If left untreated it can lead to anaemia (low haemoglobin), as there is not enough iron in the body to produce haemoglobin. The severity of symptoms can vary and present as tiredness, weakness, palpitations shortness of breath and/or sores on the tongue.

How does NAMBTS help donors with iron deficiency?

If your iron level in your body is low, based on a ferritin test done during the blood donation process, NAMBTS will provide iron supplements to you. This will help your body to replace iron faster as each tablet contains iron, folic acid and vitamin B12 which is essential for haemoglobin production.

You will be provided with iron supplements for one or three months depending on your latest iron level. Donors with a level less than 6 ng/mL will also not be allowed to donate blood for the three months that they are on iron supplementation, to allow their body sufficient time to replenish their iron stores.

If you require more information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Iron Packed Smoothie for Anaemia

This delicious blended smoothie helps with anaemia.

Ingredients:

2 cups of Kale
1 cup Orange Juice
1/2 Beetroot
1/2 cup Pineapple Chunks
2 Stalks of Celery
6 Baby Carrots

Method:

First blend Kale and orange juice in a blender. Add remaining ingredients and blend again. Add some crushed ice if you prefer it thicker.



The Impact of Apheresis Donations at NAMBTS

Sr. Judith Sinvula, Manager: Donor Division



At the Blood Transfusion Service of Namibia (NAMBTS), innovation is transforming healthcare through advanced apheresis programs. By harnessing cutting-edge technology to extract specific blood components, NAMBTS maximises the impact of every donation. Apheresis exemplifies the synergy between medical ingenuity and human generosity, empowering Namibia to save lives with precision and efficiency. NAMBTS currently runs three successful apheresis programs – plateletpheresis, plasmapheresis and double red cell donation – each tailored to meet critical healthcare needs. A promising fourth program, rabies hyperimmune plasmapheresis, is being nurtured to tackle a fatal disease with targeted plasma solutions.

Through plateletpheresis, NAMBTS supports cancer patients requiring platelet transfusions, improving survival rates and quality of life. In 2024, over 700 platelet donations were made possible for patients undergoing various treatments. Meanwhile, the plasmapheresis program leverages state-of-the-art equipment to provide plasma for immune disorders and burn treatments, with over 3 800 donations recorded last year. Double red cell donation, an innovative approach that collects twice the amount of red blood cells per session, has proven invaluable, with over 1 000 donations in 2024, for children and adults receiving filtered red cell transfusions.

The future holds great promise with the rabies hyperimmune plasmapheresis program, designed to produce plasma rich in antibodies to combat rabies. Though still in development, it represents a significant leap forward in fighting this deadly disease. Behind these successes are the selfless donors and dedicated NAMBTS staff who uphold the highest standards of safety and care. Donors embrace this advanced donation process, knowing their contributions are making a targeted difference.

Looking ahead, NAMBTS envisions expanding access to apheresis programs, ensuring no patient in need is left unsupported. Through ongoing investment in technology and innovation, the organisation is cementing its role as a leader in healthcare advancement.

Innovation and technology are more than tools, they are lifelines. By embracing these, NAMBTS is not only saving lives but also inspiring hope and a healthier future for Namibia. Together, through apheresis, we are shaping hope and a healthier future for Namibia. Together, through apheresis, we are shaping a brighter tomorrow – one donation at a time.

Share Your Story and Win

Do you have a powerful story about blood donation that could inspire others?
This is your chance to share it with the world!

The 2025 'My Blood Story' Competition invites you to create and submit a video, poem, song, play, film or animation about your real-life experience with blood donation. Whether you've received blood, donated blood, or know someone whose life was saved by it - we want to hear your story.

Why Enter?

Your story could save lives by inspiring more people to donate blood. Entries will be featured on our social media pages, helping spread awareness across Namibia and beyond. Incredible prizes to be won! Winners will be announced on World Blood Donor Day - 14 June 2025.

How to Participate:

Record your story as creatively as possible - it can be a short video, a song, a poem or even an animation. Ensure your content is based on a real event - this competition is about authentic, true stories. Make sure your content is in English (or has English subtitles). Follow copyright rules - all content must be your own original work.

Start creating today! Submit your entry between 1 March - 31 May 2025.

Key Rules and Guidelines:

1. Your story must be based on real events (i.e. not a work of fiction).
2. Your content must relate to Namibia, or you must live, study or work in Namibia.
3. As the entrant, YOU must have:
 - received blood - or had a loved one receive blood - that was donated voluntarily;
 - donated blood voluntarily; or
 - supported the giving or receiving of voluntary blood as part of your job, charitable work or volunteering at the time of the story.
4. For the purposes of this competition, creative content includes short video clips, animations, poetry recitals, music videos, songs, audio stories, podcasts and interviews; short stories, speeches, poems and song lyrics and images with or without words. This list is not exhaustive and more than one medium can be used. You are encouraged to be as creative and innovative as possible.
5. Content can be in English or another language. Please note that if your content is not in English, it MUST have English subtitles so that it can be shared to wider audiences, internationally.
6. All content must be your own work.
7. Ensure that your use of any image, photo, audio, font, logo etc. is free from copyright infringement. These assets are usually subject to the laws of copyright and intellectual property. Before using a copyrighted asset you must determine if you have permission to do so. There are a range of online sites that contain copyright free images and or audio that you can use and integrate into your content.
8. By entering, you agree that NamBTS and Global Blood Fund can use your submission (story and content) as we see fit, whether you win a prize or not.

Stay tuned for more updates and announcements! Visit <https://namibia.bloodstory.org/>

**1st prize of N\$10,000
2nd prize of N\$6,000
3rd prize of N\$3,000
Plus special commendation
prizes of N\$1,500**

Donation Kings and Queens

The man with the golden arm, Australian donor James Harrison who heroically saved more than 2 million babies donating his rare plasma that contained an antibody known as Anti-D, passed away this year at the age of 88. He started donating at the age of 18 and when he turned 81 he had donated more than 1100 times. In this edition we celebrate these local retired donors who collectively donated 1033 units of blood at NamBTS:



Barend du Plessis

I did not choose to donate blood. In 1968 I was residing at a youth centre named Morewag in Durban, KZN, and my roommate, a blood donor himself, invited me to join him as a blood donor clinic was held at our youth centre. I was very nervous but decided to give it a try even though I did not like needle pricks. I felt well afterwards and my roommate inspired me to go with him for the following two donations and then decide if I wanted to carry on - which ended in 2017 due to medical reasons.

I donated 242 times on 5 September 2017 to save the lives of people who need blood transfusions and our health. Before my next donation I felt tense and sometimes irritated and could not wait to donate blood. After donating I felt good and had a lot of energy and that is the reason why I did not want to skip a donation. I set myself a goal to donate 250 units and then retire. I knew that due to my age, it would be a challenge for me to stay healthy and fit for another three years until 2020 to meet the goal which I have set for myself. However, Dr Fortsch advised me in 2017 after examination and consultation that due to prescribed medication, I would no longer be able to donate blood. This was a disappointment for me but I accepted it in good faith.

Johannes Serfontein

While I was a student at Stellenbosch, an older friend invited me to join him for his next donation. I was feeling healthy and decided to give it a shot. After the first time I decided to do it regularly and donated 260 times. It's important for people to donate blood because it is an easy way to help other people in a way even without them knowing who you are. There are certain circumstances where blood is necessary to save a life.

I felt good after I donated because I could say thank you for the fact that I am still healthy enough to keep on donating. I developed good relationships with some of the longstanding personnel and looked forward to seeing them again. I started dreaming of the possibility of reaching 260 donations. The longer I kept my routine of donating regularly, the more I missed it if I could no go. So reaching 260 donations was very special to me. The procedure was the normal one, (the filling in of the form, the blood sample for the iron level, the blood pressure test, the needle in my arm, the friendly and helpful sister and the coke and biscuits) but for me it was a milestone, if you consider how much blood that is.

Over the years my body created so much blood that a large number of people could be helped. How wonderful! I was very glad. The feeling of thankfulness and gratification was overwhelming.

Klaus Spethman

When I found out about the Blood Transfusion Services I thought to myself and realised, that it was an opportunity to make a genuine contribution to humanity and to the people immediately around me. I thought, that should I, one day perhaps, need a blood transfusion myself, the Blood Transfusion Services would be there to help me. I had my last transfusion on 22nd December 2021, coming to a total of 262. The single blood donation is important in its own right, but it is also significant that we have a fully operational, wide-spread and reliable blood transfusion system with a sound base of dedicated blood donors. Namibia is blessed with having just such a Blood Transfusion Service which we should appreciate considering the adversity in so many countries of the world. What I enjoyed the most about my frequent donations was the thought of fulfilling my realisation of making a contribution to humanity. My last donation was a normal event for me as I received the notice of termination only after that.

Catherine Theron

I started donating in high school in the early 70s and to date, I have donated 269 times. I care about people and knowing that I can save someone's life because God blessed me with the health to be able to donate more plasma was a good motivator. I loved meeting new people and the gifts I received after milestone donations.

Connecting readers to Thandazani Mukondomi

Supervisor Oshakati Donor Division

How do you stay healthy mentally and physically?

For my mental health I avoid holding grudges. I'm always ready and willing to learn new things as well as not making decisions based on assumptions. I'm a healthy eater - mainly organic food from my small garden at my home. I enjoy taking walks and taking care of my small vegetable garden.

If you could change one thing about the world?

No hunger, no wars just everlasting peace.

What is your hope for the future of Namibian children?

Every child should have access to primary, secondary and tertiary education regardless of their family background. They should be flexible as well - that is they should be ready to face challenges and failure and learn how to resolve life's issues.

If I didn't have to work I would spend my days?

I would spend more time with my children, doing what I like e.g. cleaning my house, cooking, baking and traveling to new places.

What items are on your bucket list?

To travel to Cape Town by end of the year. To restart my gym lifestyle. To rekindle my old passion for baking cakes.

What is your favourite place to hang out and why?

Coffee shops, though tea is my favourite beverage... I love drinking tea whilst enjoying my time.

What has life taught you?

Many life lessons good and bad. To live a day as it comes, that life goes on despite the challenges we are going through, to explore and learn new things (It's never too late to learn). Not to be hard on myself and not to take life for granted. To be flexible and not to stand on rigid decisions when they are not fruitful.

What motivates you to keep going every day?

My children. Being there for them and being able to provide them with what they need.

What gives you the greatest joy ever day?

Meeting my deadlines and achieving my goals.

What makes you sad?

When things don't go according to my plan, being falsely judged without getting the facts from me and being helpless in a situation.

List 3 things you would do if you were given a million dollars today:

1. I would start my cleaning business
2. Buy sanitary ware for the vulnerable i.e. young women and adolescent girls AND
3. Build a Shelter for abused children and abused women



WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY

14th JUNE
2025



Mark your
Calendar!



Congratulations to our Oshakati Recognition & Donor Award Winners 2025

| Recognition Award 2025 | Clinic Name | Award |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------|
| NAMBTS TOP CLINIC CONTACT AWARD | Eenhana Town Ms. Olivia Ndaoya | Gold |
| | I-Care Health Training Institute Ms. Henriete Amupadhi | Silver |
| | University of Namibia (UNAM) Ogongo Campus | Bronze |
| | Mr. Phillip Hoeseb | |
| NAMBTS CORPORATE AWARD | Ongwediva Medipark | Gold |
| | Dr Weder Kauta & Hoveka Inc | Silver |
| | Bank Windhoek - Oshakati | Bronze |
| NAMBTS GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AWARD | Oshikuku Town | Gold |
| | Omuthiya Hospital | Silver |
| | Intermediate Hospital Onandjokwe | Bronze |
| | NAMPOL Oshakati | Bronze |
| NAMBTS COMMUNITY AWARD | International University of Management (IUM) Ongwediva | Gold |
| | Oshakati Pharmacy | Silver |
| | YPG Ondangwa | Bronze |
| NAMBTS EDUCATION AWARD | Mwadikange Kaulinge Secondary School | Gold |
| | Onawa Secondary School | Silver |
| | Nehale Secondary School | Bronze |
| NAMBTS TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL AWARD | University of Namibia (UNAM) JEDS CAMPUS | Gold |
| | University of Namibia (UNAM) HP CAMPUS | Silver |
| | Valombola VTC Ongwediva | Bronze |
| NAMBTS PEER PROMOTER'S AWARD | Mweshipandeka Secondary School | Gold |
| | Gabriel Taapopi Secondary School | Silver |
| | Oshigambo High School | Bronze |
| NAMBTS PEER PROMOTER'S AWARD REGIONAL | Onawa Secondary School | Gold |
| | David Sheehama Secondary School | Silver |
| | Eheke Secondary School | Bronze |
| NAMBTS CENTRE / RETAIL AWARD | Maroela Mall | Gold |
| | Game Mall Oshakati | Silver |
| | Ramos Realtors Outapi | Bronze |
| NAMBTS INDUSTRIAL AWARD | Build It Oshakati | Gold |
| | Coca-Cola Oshakati | Silver |
| NAMBTS MEDIA AWARD | KATI FM | Gold |
| | Omulunga Radio | Silver |
| NAMBTS ADVERTISING AWARD | New Era Oshakati | Gold |
| | Future Media News | Silver |

Milestone Donors 2025

50 Milestone

- 1. Karl-Heinz Piechazek
- 2. Efraim Tshivute Shikesho

75 Milestone

- 1. Johannes Mwadhina Shilongo
- 2. Elrico Mc Allen Engelbrecht

125 Milestone

- 1. Tuhafeni Sheuyange

Oshakati Recognition Award Ceremony held on 10 April 2025



Dr lipinge from Omuthiya Hospital



Mr Nataneal Gaoseb Bank Whk Oshakati



SR Judith Sinvula & Mr Karl Heinz



Mr Karl Heinz



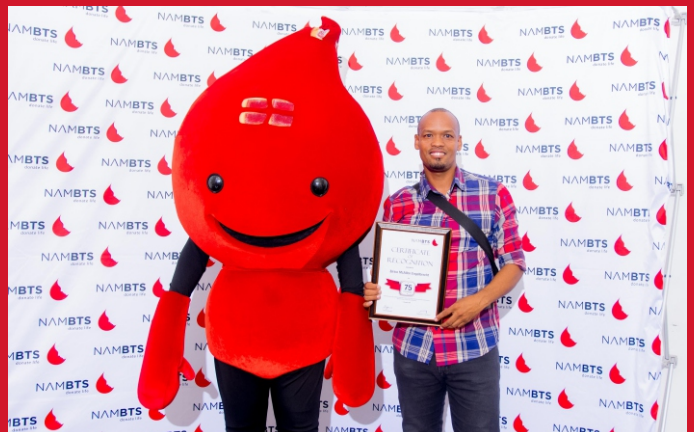
His Worship The Mayor Leonard Hangover (Mayor of Oshakati)



Ms Petrina Hailonga accompanied by Mr Teofilus Shavuka from
UNAM Hifikepunye Pohamba Campus Ongwediva.



His Worship The Mayor Leonard Hango with him Ms Lina David from
Ekeke Secondary School



Mr Rico Engelbrecht