Unique birthday party saves lives

First-time donor Jenn Baron brings family and friends to blood clinic for 26th birthday celebration

As an oncology nurse at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Jenn Baron relies on blood products to do her job every day.

“We transfuse kids every single day,” says Jenn. “We not only see the need for blood for cancer patients, but elsewhere in the hospital as well.”

On a recent birthday, Jenn was inspired to help increase the blood supply by donating blood herself. And with her upcoming birthday in mind, she decided to get her friends, colleagues, and family in on the act, too.

“I think there’s something meaningful in not only giving to a cause, but to sharing it with others.”

With just a few weeks left before her birthday blood bash, she quickly got to work planning the party: booking 25 donation appointments through Canadian Blood Services, creating a Facebook event page, contacting potential donors to talk about the donation process and eligibility requirements, and packing special loot bags for her party guests.

Twenty-four people committed to give blood in honour of Jenn’s special day, many for the first time.

“Nearly 80 per cent of the group were first-time donors, which is really exciting because everyone experienced it together,” says Jenn, who also gave blood for the first time. “Many of my friends were using social media to share their first blood donation experience.”

While Jenn considered the unique birthday party to be a success, the impact of the event truly hit her at work later that week.

“My first day back, I gave a transfusion to one of my patients, and helped a colleague with transfusions to two other patients,” she notes. “Checking the registered lot numbers on each bag, and knowing that those numbers are connected to someone who donated blood, it really brought the entire process full circle.”