



Community
CONNECTION
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The Unicorn Blood Donor -- Brian Bobbin

We're not saying that Brian Bobbin, 32, of Northampton, has a single, large, pointed, spiraling horn projecting from his forehead. In fact, the definition of unicorn aligned with Brian is something a little simpler – “a person or thing that is rare and highly valued.”

“That’s the version of unicorn we mean when we say that Brian is a Miller-Keystone Blood Center unicorn,” said Rami Nemeh, chief operating officer. “He is young, he gives platelets on a super-regular (every two weeks) basis, he is a financial supporter of MKBC and he’s happy to do all of it. And, there isn’t a background story of a family member that was sick or had trauma and, therefore, needed blood. He just does it because it’s the right thing to do.”

Brian is truly “rare and highly valued” in terms of his support of MKBC. “If we could figure out how to encourage others his age to lean in to supporting MKBC the way he does, there wouldn’t be a blood shortage,” added Nemeh. Brian Bobbin began giving blood in 2009 during a blood drive. “I’m one of those people who likes to try things once,” said Bobbin. “It was fairly quick, it was easy, it didn’t hurt, I had no reactions and I felt good afterwards.” Then, as is often the case, life got in the way. He had started a new job and just lost the momentum. But, then, he made the decision to do better and has been a consistent blood donor for 13 years having surpassed the 50-Gallon Lifetime Donor milestone with 207 total donations so far. A mechanic by chance, Brian is a welder by trade having graduated from the



the Welder Training & Testing Institute in Allentown. He's worked on some huge, high-visibility projects including flood gates that have protected New Orleans since their installation after Hurricane Katrina as well as repair work on the famous Whitestone Bridge in the Bronx

These days, you'll find him every other Saturday each month between 6:45 a.m. and 7 a.m. giving platelets. "What time I get to speak with him is always interesting as our conversation is usually centered around music. He always wears a band t-shirt whenever he comes in which is right in my wheelhouse as the wife/mother of a musician," said Yvonne (aka Yaya) Vallone, donor recruitment specialist. "Brian is also a Weekend Warrior, which means he donates platelets at least twelve times in one (1) calendar year. Any donor who commits to that kind of schedule is definitely a hero in my book."

Currently, Brian works 10-hour shifts, 5 days a week as a mechanic on heavy excavating equipment for a local firm. And on weekends, after his MKBC appointments, you can find

him cycling along the Ironton Rail Trail, Nor-Bath or D&L trails.

"I don't find the time to give blood, I make the time." He's a member of the "Be The Match Registry," an organization that connects patients with blood diseases with bone marrow donors and he even encourages his aunt and uncle to stay consistent with their blood donations as well.

"I love Brian! Always happy and nice to talk to and always reschedules," said Angela Lopiano, donor recruitment specialist.

Monique Ricketts, lead staff in Bethlehem, agrees. "From the first time I met him up until now, he is always so pleasant, ready, and willing to give the gift of life." And, if that isn't enough, he decided that becoming a financial donor to MKBC was "just another extra way to help out."

"My dad said to me when I was a kid, 'Do what needs to be done without someone having to tell you to do it,' and that's the motivation for giving that drives me. Just do it because it's important to do and don't make a big deal about it."



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