

Jim Kerr: Students aid family's drive to honor daughter

No matter how you look at it, 500 is a huge number.

And when you're talking about donors for a one-day blood drive, 500 is nearly untouchable.

But for Harvey and Sue Hohl of Douglassville and students at Daniel Boone High School, 500 donors is a goal, a passion, a pursuit and a blessing.

If you're unfamiliar with the Hohls' story, let me give you a brief background.

In 2003, Angela Hohl, known to friends as Angie, was a healthy 17-year-old about to start her senior year at Daniel Boone. That summer, she began to feel ill, and tests soon revealed an aggressive form of leukemia.

The cancer swiftly invaded her lungs, and only 26 days after the diagnosis, Angie was gone.

Naturally, her parents, Harvey and Sue, were devastated. But in the months that followed, the Hohls grew firm in their resolve to help others in Angie's name.

You see, when Angie was in the hospital fighting for her life, she required red blood cells and platelets to rebuild her blood count after chemotherapy. Those treatments included tissue-specific platelets that were hard to come by.

With their daughter slipping away, the Hohls felt helpless waiting hours on end for blood products to arrive.

"After it was all over, we just felt so compelled to do something," Sue said. "We thought, 'What can we do to bring awareness?'"

With the help of Miller-Keystone Blood Center, the Hohls organized the first blood drive in Angie's memory in November 2003 at Daniel Boone. Nearly 150 pints were donated.

Since then, the numbers have climbed steadily, and last year an astounding 417 pints were donated in a single day. This year, on Dec. 18, they're shooting for 500 donors.

Harvey and Sue credit Boone art teacher Karen Shriner and her students for promoting the blood drive and providing the energy it needs to keep growing.

"Many of them now don't know us, and they didn't know Angie," Sue said. "But because of Karen's enthusiasm, the kids really get into it. We can't say enough about them."

The truth is, you don't have to know the Hohls to appreciate their story. They're good people doing something vitally important in memory of a daughter they miss terribly.

"Every time someone donates in Angie's memory, we feel blessed," Sue said. "It's like we receive a hug straight from heaven."

With your help, 500 doesn't have to be such a big number after all.

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Courtesy of the Hohl family
Sue and Harvey Hohl of Douglassville with their daughter, Angie, 17, on vacation in the summer of 2003, just before Angie became ill with an aggressive form of leukemia. She died a few weeks later.