



HISPANIC FAMILY CENTER OF SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY  
*Providing the community with a broad range of culturally relevant social services and advocacy programs  
that promote and encourage empowerment and self sufficiency since 1976.*

## News Release

### **Hispanic Family Center to Hold Community Blood Drive in Response to the NJ Blood Services Critical Need for Diversity in Their Blood Supply**

#### ***NJ Blood Services severely lacks diversity in its blood supply, putting chronically transfused Latino and African American patients at great risk***

May 3, 2011 (Camden, NJ) – The Hispanic Family Center of Southern New Jersey will team up with NJ Blood Services to host a community blood drive at its Family Success Center, located at 2850 Federal Street in Camden, on May 6, 2011 from 10am to 4pm. The blood drive is being organized in response to the critical need for diversity in the nation's blood supply. Chronically transfused patients, such as those with sickle cell disease, thalassemia, cancer and leukemia, pregnant women and new born babies, may build up antibodies causing the body to 'reject' a transfusion. Frequently transfused patients may require a precisely-matched transfusion which most often is in someone from the same ethnic or racial background. HFC Executive Director, Elsa Candelario anticipates a successful event, "We know how important it is to increase the diversity of our blood supply in Camden. The agency hopes to raise awareness with this event and draw a wealth of support from the community."

African American and Hispanic blood donors are important to the diversity in the overall blood supply in the US. Currently African-Americans account for only 7.3% of nationwide blood donations, and Hispanics account for only 4.4% of nationwide blood donations. Approximately 1 in 500 African American infants and 1 in 1400 Latino infants are born with SCD each year. SCD patients must be routinely transfused; and because of the high prevalence of Sickle Cell Disease in the African American and Hispanic communities, it is critical that matching blood is found and used for these patients. This blood would most likely come from other African Americans and Hispanics.

Unfortunately, blood is not as available as it needs to be. 1 in 3 people will need a blood transfusion at some point in their lifetime. This seems to be due to a lack of education and awareness about how desperately people need blood. In addition, there is a limited understanding about how important precisely matched units of blood are, in particular for people of our diverse communities who may require very specific transfusions to live. An increase in blood donations from Camden City's diverse communities is a simple, humane response to combating a serious disease.

Program Director Kristin Nicely Colangelo states, "The need for a diverse blood supply is not well known. Most people believe that any donation will suffice but for those who are required to receive transfusions regularly, a lack of available, precisely-matched blood is often life-threatening"

The Hispanic Family Center advocates that all eligible adults in the Camden area stop by the Family Success Center to give blood. To be considered eligible to donate blood, individuals must be at least 17 years of age, weigh at least 110 pounds, and be in general good health. Eligible individuals are urged to call 856-963-0270 to find out how they can give the gift of life.

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*The Hispanic Family Center of Southern New Jersey is a multi-service agency dedicated to providing the community with a broad range of culturally relevant social services and advocacy programs that promote and encourage empowerment and self-sufficiency. To meet this goal the Hispanic Family Center of Southern New Jersey offers over 30 programs including after school programs, employment and training programs, health education and prevention services, mental health services, senior services and substance abuse treatment. Each year the Hispanic Family Center of Southern New Jersey serves over 6,000 individuals and families.*

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