

Abbott And Big Ten Bring Back 'We Give Blood' As U.S. Faces Blood Supply Crisis

- "We Give Blood" brings together all 18 Big Ten® schools in a competition to drive the most blood donations and win \$1 million from global healthcare company Abbott
- For only the second time in its history, the American Red Cross has declared a national blood crisis after donations dropped to a four-year summer low, threatening the availability of lifesaving blood for patients across the country
- Abbott and the Big Ten urge people to donate blood now and will count those early donations toward the competition, which officially kicks off Aug. 26
- Anyone can donate blood anywhere in the U.S. between Aug. 12-Dec. 4 and log their donation starting Aug. 26 for a Big Ten school at BigTen.org/Abbott or by texting GIVEBLOOD to 222688 (ABBOTT) and select an exclusive, limited-edition T-shirt* while supplies last
- The movement aims to fuel a new generation of blood donors at a time when [2.5 million donations](#) — nearly a quarter of all donations — come from people over the age of 65

ABBOTT PARK, Ill. and ROSEMONT, Ill., Aug. 12, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- Abbott (NYSE: ABT), the global healthcare leader, and the Big Ten Conference today announced the return of the "We Give Blood" drive, a nationwide competition uniting all 18 Big Ten universities to turn school pride into lifesaving action. [Every two seconds](#), someone in the U.S. needs a blood transfusion — car accident victims, cancer patients, mothers with childbirth or pregnancy complications and more. Yet critical blood shortages continue, with the American Red Cross recently [declaring a blood crisis](#) as donations fell to a four-year summer low.

Abbott created the "We Give Blood" drive to help secure blood supply sustainability today and into the future. The competition officially kicks off Aug. 26, but to help address the current shortages, Abbott and the Big Ten are urging people to donate now. Any donations made between Aug. 12 and the official start will be honored as part of the competition. In addition to addressing current shortages, the "We Give Blood" drive also aims to help address the blood supply pipeline problem.

Today, [nearly a quarter](#) of all blood donations come from people over 65, many of whom will eventually be unable to donate. With only about 3% of those in the U.S. eligible to donate doing so, the need to recruit new donors is urgent. In the Big Ten community population alone, nearly 40 million people are likely eligible but may not yet be giving blood. If 1 in 15 of those people commit to donating blood into the future, that would close the gap left by an aging donor population.

"The future of America's blood supply starts on college campuses," said Robert B. Ford, chairman and chief executive officer, Abbott. "When a young person gives blood for the first time and makes it a habit, that's potentially decades of lifesaving donations. The 'We Give Blood' drive is how we turn school pride into a generational commitment — and how we make sure that when someone needs blood, it's there."

Making a big impact on blood donation

In the first two years of the "We Give Blood" drive, blood centers reported an increase in blood supply compared to the year prior to the competition. An America's Blood Centers [survey](#) that compared the last week of the 2024 and 2025 competitions versus the same period in 2023 showed as much as an 88% increase in member centers reporting a 3-day or more blood supply.

Overall, more than 100,000 total donations in the competition's first two years helped save as many as 300,000 lives. And critically, the competition is building the donor base that the U.S. health system will depend on for decades to come: Nearly one-third of student donors last year gave blood for the first time, and 96% said they would do it again.

Turning school pride into action

The "We Give Blood" competition taps into something every Big Ten fan understands: rivalry. Abbott awards \$1 million to the school with the most donations to support student or community health. Previous winners have already put that money to work. Nebraska's 2024 win funded mental health support for Nebraska veterans, established an on-campus produce garden and added a full-time financial coach for students, among other initiatives. Wisconsin's 2025 victory expanded peer wellness coaching, created an on-campus course for experiential health and leadership development, and launched Wisconsin ArtsRx, a mental health-focused concert series modeled after Carnegie Hall's Well-Being Concerts program.

"Big Ten fans show up for their teams in the stands, and now they're showing up for their communities and people who need blood as well," said Tony Petitti, commissioner, Big Ten Conference. "Tens of thousands of people — many of them first-time donors — have already stepped up. Our job now is to keep that energy going, because there is no off-season for the need for blood."

This year's competition will offer anyone who presents to donate and logs their donation for a Big Ten school a limited-edition, school-specific T-shirt while supplies last*. British travel creators Josh and Jase — who have amassed millions of followers documenting their love of American culture — will also visit each Big Ten campus throughout the season, highlighting what makes each school unique.

The "We Give Blood" winner will be announced at the 2026 Discover® Big Ten Football Championship Game on Dec. 5 in Indianapolis. A live leaderboard will track donations in real time at BigTen.Org/Abbott.

Abbott, the health sciences and diagnostics partner of the Big Ten Conference, helps screen the world's blood supply. Abbott

has partnered with the multimedia rightsholders across each Big Ten campus: Learfield, Playfly Sports and JMI Sports.

Frequently asked questions

What is the "We Give Blood" drive?

"We Give Blood" is a nationwide blood donation competition among all 18 Big Ten universities. The campaign is designed to help boost the blood supply in both the near and long term by galvanizing the Big Ten community of students, fans and alumni to donate blood now and create a new generation of lifelong blood donors by introducing blood donation to college-aged students.

Why is blood donation important right now?

Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs a blood transfusion — car accident victims, cancer patients, mothers with childbirth or pregnancy complications and more — which is why we need people to donate blood regularly. Disruptions from bad weather or seasonal illness can leave hospitals with low levels of blood. The American Red Cross recently [declared a national blood crisis](#) as donations hit a four-year summer low. Blood cannot be manufactured and supply depends on volunteer donors.

Who can participate?

Anyone in the U.S. over 18 who meets donor eligibility criteria. Donations from students, alumni and fans all count toward each school's total. People can donate at any blood drive or blood center in the U.S. Participants can support a Big Ten school — and help address blood shortages — in three steps:

1. Donate blood at any blood drive or blood center in the U.S. between Aug. 12 and Dec. 4.
2. Take a photo at the blood drive or screenshot an email confirmation of the donation.
3. Submit it at BigTen.org/Abbott or by texting GIVEBLOOD to 222688 (ABBOTT) starting Aug. 26.

What if I try to donate blood, but I can't? Can I still support a Big Ten school in "We Give Blood"?

Attempted blood donations don't count as a point on the Big Ten leaderboard, but a school-specific "We Give Blood" T-shirt can still be redeemed while supplies last*. Submit a photo at the donation site as proof of the attempted donation at BigTen.org/Abbott or by texting GIVEBLOOD to 222688.

Do I need to donate blood on campus?

No. Donations made at any blood center or blood drive anywhere in the U.S. can be submitted for the "We Give Blood" drive.

How many students, alumni and fans does the Big Ten community have? And can I donate blood for "We Give Blood" if I'm not part of it?

The Big Ten has more than 817,000 students, 9.4 million alumni and 54 million fans. However, anyone can donate blood for "We Give Blood."

When does the competition take place?

To help address the current blood crisis, the 2026 competition will accept early donations starting Aug. 12. Anyone can donate blood at any blood center or blood drive anywhere in the U.S. between Aug. 12-Dec. 4 and, starting Aug. 26, log their donation for a Big Ten school at BigTen.org/Abbott or by texting GIVEBLOOD to 222688 (ABBOTT) and select a limited-edition, school-specific "We Give Blood" T-shirt while supplies last.

Any donor incentive offered as part of this campaign is non-transferable, not redeemable for cash, and available to individuals who present to donate. For additional information, including a list of available incentives, visit bigten.org/abbott.

About the Big Ten Conference:

The Big Ten Conference is an association of 18 world-class universities whose member institutions share a common mission of research, graduate, professional and undergraduate teaching and public service. Founded in 1896, the Big Ten has sustained a comprehensive set of shared practices and policies that enforce the priority of academics in the lives of students competing in intercollegiate athletics and emphasize the values of integrity, fairness and competitiveness. The Big Ten Conference sponsors 28 official sports, 14 for men and 14 for women, and the broad-based programs of the 18 Big Ten institutions provide direct financial support for more than 14,000 student-athletes. For more information, visit BigTen.org.

About Abbott:

Abbott is a global healthcare leader that helps people live more fully at all stages of life. Our portfolio of life-changing technologies spans the spectrum of healthcare, with leading businesses and products in diagnostics, medical devices, nutritionals and branded generic medicines. Our 122,000 colleagues serve people in more than 160 countries.

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