

 **Canada's Lifeline:** Our frontline



I'm proud every day to be here as a frontline worker.

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Robenpreet,
Canadian Blood Services
Donor care associate in Kelowna, B.C.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, we're bringing you stories of our employees who continue to work on the front lines. Robenpreet Sooch is a donor care associate in Kelowna, B.C.

I first visited Canadian Blood Services as part of a tour while I was in Vancouver studying to be a lab technician. I remember thinking, this is a really nice environment. It's all happy people. I was hired in May 2013 at the donor centre in Kelowna, which is my hometown.

As a donor care associate I work directly with donors. I screen them when they arrive for appointments and I insert the needle to do the blood draw. We get to know each other because a lot of our donors are very committed and have been coming in for years. I can think of one donor from Penticton who did his 500th donation last year. Some of my own co-workers are donors here as well, like Patricia Hanson, who has donated more than 75 times. Her most recent donation happened just before we started wearing masks in our donor centre in response to the pandemic.

'I see firsthand patients who need blood products'

Sometimes, donors will request a specific DCA. They'll point and say, I want you! Everyone here is really good at their job, but sometimes people like to go with the employee who has given them a good experience in the past. Our donors are here to support us, and we're here to give them the best service we can.

With the pandemic we're doing a lot more cleaning to keep everyone safe. Wearing a mask and face shield all day has been a difficult adjustment too, but I'm proud every day to be here as a

frontline worker. Recently I ran into one of our volunteers who needs blood products, and she actually thanked me for continuing to work. I also work part-time as a lab technician in a hospital so I see firsthand patients who need blood products. I'm just glad that we are still here to help people in need.

'Usually I'm a big traveller'

At home, I live with my parents who are in their 70s, so I'm being careful to protect them. I'll change out of my work clothes before I get home, and I'm doing the grocery shopping and other errands so they don't have to go out. I do worry about them missing out on their regular activities, like volunteering at the temple on Sundays. We have a big family and my parents haven't been able to see their grandkids since mid-March.

Usually I'm a big traveller. I try to take three trips a year and I was actually supposed to be in Europe right now. But I'm making the best of the situation, tackling some projects I'd put off because I'm normally so busy. This will pass. We just have to keep going, be positive and stay healthy.