

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **FBS First in Florida to Utilize Improved Blood Storage Bags** *Universal White Cell Reduction Is Also Accomplished*

(St. Petersburg, FL: 04/18/08) Florida Blood Services (FBS) continues to subscribe to its mission to be a world-class provider of blood, blood products and services by introducing a new blood collection and storage container. This year, over 500,000 blood components of plasma, platelets and red cells will be manufactured from whole blood donations. As of April 1, 2008, all blood donations received by Florida Blood Services (FBS) have been drawn into new state-of-the-art blood bags that include an in-line red blood cell filter to remove the white blood cells, or leukocytes, after the blood is donated. Usage of these new blood bags has resulted in improved blood storage, better purity of blood components and due to the 500ml bag size, maximized transfusion doses to better meet patient needs. Florida Blood Services is the first blood center in Florida to utilize this state-of-the-art blood bag.

Blood Components, specifically red blood cells, platelets and plasma will be stored in a DEHP-free blood bag material that is virtually unbreakable in the frozen state, maintains platelets much better during their short, 5-day shelf-life, and will contain red blood cells that are free of white blood cells. Specific blood components are used to treat seriously ill patients, such as those undergoing chemotherapy, organ and bone marrow transplantation, surgery and traumas, as well as infants in area neonatal intensive care units that require that special quality of care.

This new blood pack unit is manufactured by Fenwal, Inc, based in Lake Zurich, Illinois. Scientific studies conclude that white blood cells increase the possibility of side effects, while providing no measurable therapeutic value to patient recipients. The improvements from universal leukocyte reduction include superior patient comfort and avoidance of an immune response, often leading to reduced hospitalization time for recipients. Leukocyte reduction is currently the standard of care in red blood cell transfusion with over 80% of the blood transfused in the US now being leukocyte-reduced.

*“FBS has made a huge investment in the quality of blood collection and storage containers for blood we provide to patients throughout the Tampa Bay area” said Dr. German Leparc, Chief Medical Officer for FBS. “There is no substitute for quality in the preparation of lifesaving components. Blood is a drug, and as a licensed blood establishment the FDA considers us to be a pharmaceutical manufacturer. With that comes a standard of care for both quality and safety and as our main objective to provide blood with the most therapeutic advantage to the transfused patient. The new plastic along with our 500 ml container provides the most substantial and quality dose of Red Blood Cells, Plasma and Platelets to be delivered to patients requiring transfusion,” said Leparc.*

FBS provides for the blood needs of patients at 36 hospitals in Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco and Pinellas Counties, through the generosity of volunteer blood donors. Over 750 donations are required daily, due to the high quality of medical care in Tampa Bay that serves the most critically ill patients throughout west central Florida. FBS is a not-for-profit healthcare organization, founded in 1994 by the merger of Community Regional Blood Center, Hunter Blood Center and Southwest Florida Blood Bank. FBS maintains their corporate headquarters and blood testing facilities at 10100 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. St. N. in St. Petersburg. FBS employs over 600 people in order to conduct their vital operations, including staffing over 30 bloodmobiles and 13 donor centers.

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