

# REAL MEN GIVE BLOOD.

## THEY ALSO GO TO THE DOCTOR.

Being a high school principal keeps Sam Sexton young. And giving blood at his high school's blood drives just might have kept him alive.



For “twenty-something years” Sexton has enjoyed his job as a high school principal, mainly because of the kids. “The last thing I want is to be a crotchety old man who doesn’t understand these guys,” he says. “Keeping up with their trends, their music, even their technology, that’s what keeps me young.”



Twice a year his high school, La Vega High School located just north of Waco, hosts blood drives with Carter BloodCare. To set an example, Sexton gives. In fact, he gives double red cells. “I’m B+ so they like me a lot,” he explains. He gives at all their drives, as well as on his own.

Last September, Sexton signed up to give B+ double red cells at the school’s fall drive, like always. And like always, he was given a complete mini physical before donating. His blood pressure was checked, his temperature was taken and his hemoglobin was tested. But unlike always, Sexton was told he couldn’t give because his hemoglobin level was low.

Sexton, who had been giving blood since his college days, was confused. “That was the first time my iron has ever been low,” he says. But then he began thinking about how tired he had felt. “I thought it was just because I’m a high school principal. But when I found out my iron was low, I decided to see my doctor.” That was a smart, if not lifesaving move for the 57-year-old former coach, husband and father of two.

Carter BloodCare has always tested donors’ hemoglobin levels. A hemoglobin level below 12.5 is considered low and will keep someone from giving blood. According to Dr. Geeta Paranjape, Carter BloodCare’s Medical Director of Clinical Services, low hemoglobin is common with young women, but not so common with men.

**“If a man is anemic, we recommend that they see their primary care doctor to have it investigated,” she explains. “The causes of low hemoglobin can vary. It can be caused by something as simple as hemorrhoids, or something as serious as cancer. You never know, which is why it’s always a good idea to have it checked.”**

Sexton’s family physician, who also happened to be a former student, ran a series of upper GI tests, and eventually a colonoscopy. That’s when the reason for his fatigue and low hemoglobin was discovered. Sexton had a two-centimeter tumor penetrating the walls of his colon. In other words – in more frightening words – he had colon cancer.



The diagnosis came as a shock. Sexton had no family history of colon cancer, and an earlier colonoscopy showed no signs of polyps, no tumors. After meeting with a surgeon and an oncologist, surgery was scheduled and the tumor, along with approximately one foot of Sexton's colon, was removed.



After spending six days in the hospital, the principal went home to recover. Although chemotherapy and radiation were not required, it was still, in Sexton's words, "terrible."

"I ended up with a long scar down my stomach and around my belly button," he says. "That kind of incision hurts! And it really messed up my bikini line."

With the tumor gone, his hemoglobin returned to normal, producing the red blood cells needed to carry oxygen to his heart. This in turn restored the much-needed energy he thought he was losing to middle age. He was also able to take off a few pounds, which, according to Sexton, "didn't hurt."

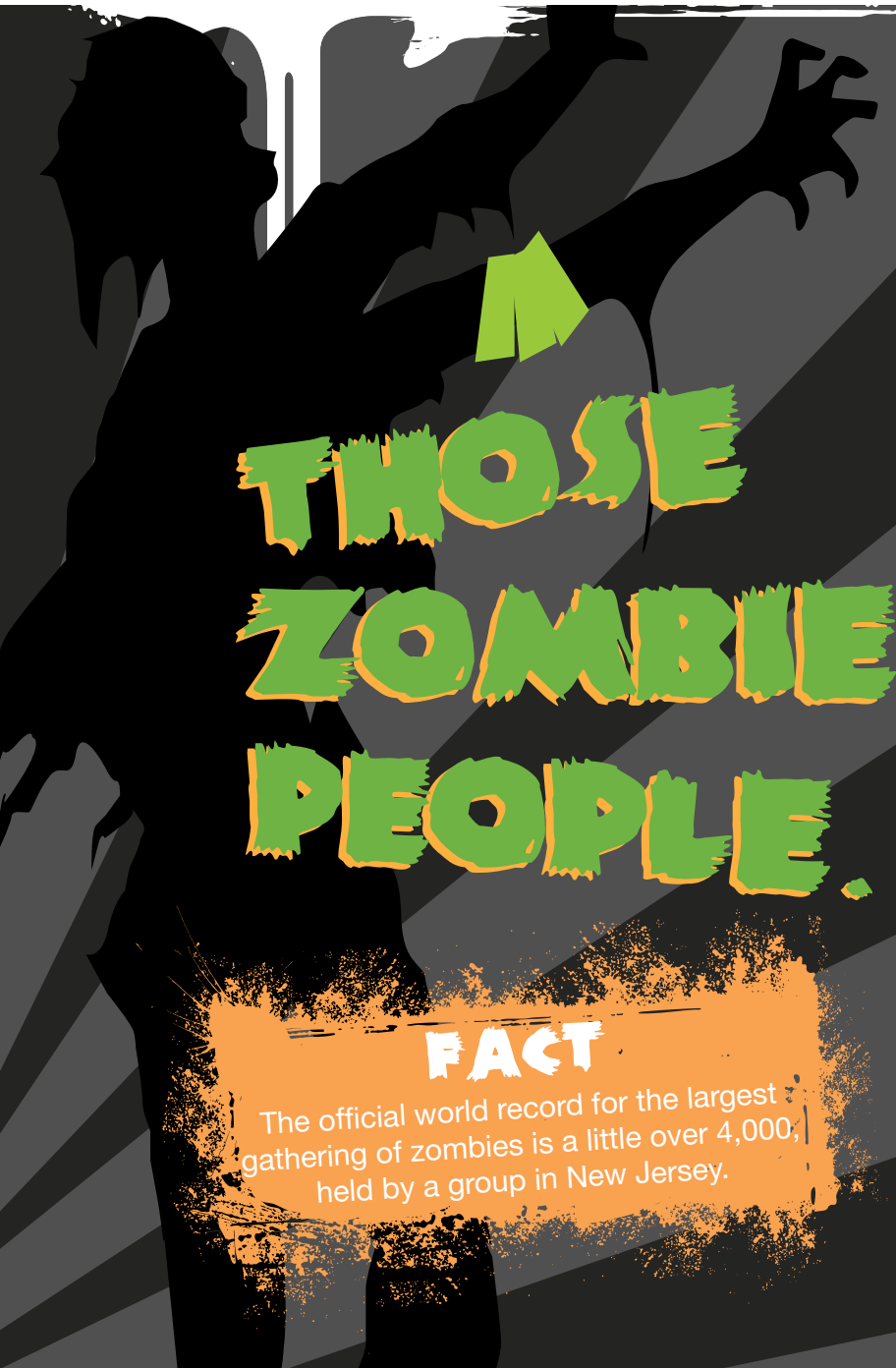
After three weeks at home, he was ready to get off the couch and get back to school; back to the students who keep him young. "They thought I was on a three-week vacation," he said. "Some vacation!" Sexton never went public with his cancer because he didn't want the students to worry. It's obvious they are a priority. "There's just something about this school and these students that gets into your blood," he explained. "To me they're like a bank, and my job is to keep making deposits into their lives."



And in just two years, if he keeps a clean bill of health, Principal Sam Sexton will continue giving blood at La Vega High School blood drives. He knows it saves lives. And he's thankful it saved his own.



**fvi**  
age 46-55 is one of our largest donor groups.



Kael Graham was an unemployed pizza delivery guy who wanted to do something positive with his days. So he decided to organize a Zombie Walk in downtown Dallas.

Kael and partner Chrissy Seber (whom Kael credits with being the "left brain" and the organizer of the two) rolled up their sleeves and went to work. With the North Texas Food Bank as the beneficiary, the first Walk brought close to 3,500 zombies to the streets of downtown Dallas.

"I thought – hey, maybe 50 people will come out – it'll be fun," he recalls. A Facebook page was created and the response was unexpectedly – huge. "People were more excited than we anticipated," Kael says. "It was scary; really, really scary!"

A second Walk was planned for 2011, and Carter BloodCare was selected as the beneficiary. The blood center would receive a financial contribution for every \$25 entry, plus lots of great press for the mission of giving blood, which saves lives, ironically. The Walk drew close to 4,500 people/zombies, and several dozen who came out that day agreed to give blood.

With two successful zombie walks under their belts, a 2012 Walk may or may not happen. Chrissy works full time for Farmers Insurance, and Kael is a full-time stockbroker. As much fun as the events were, they took a lot of work, planning and negotiating. And since they are only two people, Zombie Walk 2012 is up for discussion.



Despite a crazy schedule, Zombie Walk organizer Chrissy Seber found time to give blood.