

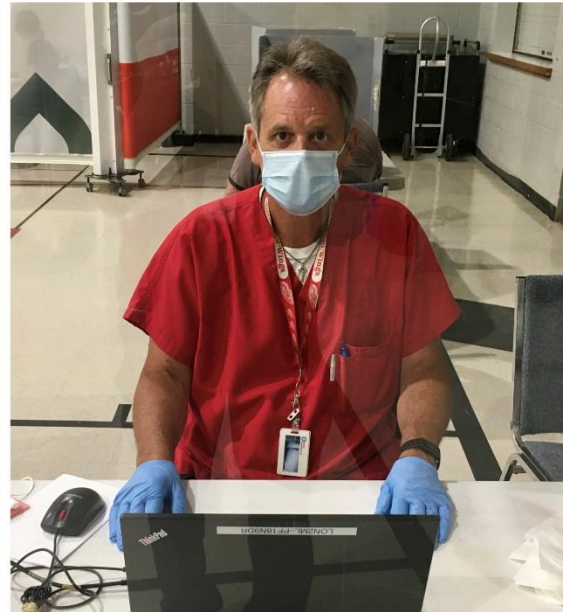
 **Canada's Lifeline:** Our frontline

“

I help donors feel welcome.

Read more at blood.ca/stories

Ken,
Canadian Blood Services
Donor services representative in London, Ont.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, we're bringing you stories of our employees who continue to work on the front lines. Ken Walker is a donor services representative in London, Ont.

I joined Canadian Blood Services 12 years ago at age 50. Before that I'd worked in customer service at a bank. In that job I spent most of my time on the phone. Here, I'm always meeting people in person. If you enjoy talking to people, it's a great job. I enjoy talking to everybody. If someone is a new donor and a little nervous (lots of people are afraid of needles!) I can often get them laughing with me.

As a donor services representative I think of myself as a greeter. We're normally the first person you'd see when you arrive for your appointment at a donor centre or donation event. So I help donors feel welcome. I check them in, help them with any non-medical questions, book them for their next appointment and guide them to the next step. It's important to be pleasant. If we're miserable or have a bad attitude, they're going to feel that all the way through their visit.

'Donors have been very understanding'

We have a plasma donation centre in London, and those donors come in very frequently, so I get to know them well. We also host groups of people who donate in honour of someone who has died, or who is ill, and who has needed blood products. Sometimes I get to meet the patient, such as a little boy or girl who has cancer. But when the people come in for those events they aren't sad. They're doing something good and enjoying themselves.

Unfortunately we have had to make changes because of the pandemic. For those group events, people have to book their own separate appointments, and they can't gather at a table to enjoy snacks while they're with us. It will be nice when we can return to that, but for now we have to keep everyone safe. For me, that means lots of extra cleaning! I've also been trained to staff our

new wellness checkpoints, where we ask donors a few questions and take their temperatures before they go in for their appointment.

And we are all wearing masks. It's tough, because I wear glasses for reading, and they keep getting fogged up no matter what I do. But the donors have been very understanding about the masks. They like the red ones we have been giving out. When they see them, they'll think of the day they donated blood during the pandemic.

What am I doing to look after myself? I go to the cottage as much as I can. I'm an active person. Maybe too active sometimes! I'm always keeping myself busy.