

 **Canada's Lifeline:** Our frontline

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It's important to just keep heading toward our goals.

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Marylee,
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During the COVID-19 pandemic, we're bringing you stories of our employees who continue to work on the front lines. Marylee Dudgeon is a laboratory assistant in St. John's, N.L.

I joined Canadian Blood Services 36 years ago in Manitoba when it was still the Red Cross. Shout out to my Winnipeg people! My mom was a nurse so I was always interested in the medical world, as well as in laboratory work. So I guess that's how I got started. I was quite young then.

I transferred to St. John's in 2003 and I work in both production and distribution. That means some days you'll find me processing blood donations into different components — red blood cells, plasma, and cryoprecipitate, which is a product made from frozen plasma. I process blood that's collected at the donor centre in this building as well as from the donation events we run in the community. I also have a role here called “production lead hand” which involves ensuring the production records are accurate and complete before the products can be released for distribution. On the days I'm in distribution, I prepare the orders for blood products that go to hospitals.

‘I'm very thankful for donors’

It's so important that as a team, we get quality products to patients no matter what is going on in the world around us. I'm very thankful for donors who come in and give of themselves even in these difficult times. I have a niece who was born premature many years ago and required blood transfusions. I also have a nephew with a rare disease who has had a kidney transplant. He's on dialysis now and waiting for a second transplant. All you really have to do is think of a

loved one —mine or anyone else’s actually — requiring our products, and you feel the importance of what you’re doing every day.

‘I’m trying to do my part’

How has the pandemic changed my work life? I find coming to work during abnormal times gives me a sense of purpose and normalcy. It helps me to cope with what’s going on. At the moment I’m really only going between work and home because I’m trying to do my part to flatten the curve as much as possible. It is stressful just knowing that this is going on, even when you’re trying to do your part as well as you can. So I’ll take my little dog for a walk and play ball with her. She’s a great sounding board because she always agrees with me. Or I’ll ride my motorcycle. I may not look like a motorcycle rider but I have a Spyder actually, a three-wheel.

I also play the baritone ukulele and sing. My dad played ukulele and many other instruments so I was introduced to the ukulele early in life and switched to the baritone uke later. I’m too shy to play in front of anyone so I just play alone in the basement. But I find it’s a real release as well.

Even though it’s stressful and uncertain sometimes, it’s important to just keep heading toward our goals, whether it’s at work or at home. To do our part to help patients get well, and to keep ourselves and the people around us well.