



COMMERCIAL-NEWS | ROBERT TOMLINSON

Veronica Wooten (right) and American Red Cross nurse Eric Kendziorek (left) pose for a photo after Wooten donated blood during a blood drive event at the Immaculate Conception Catholic School Tuesday.

## Red Cross holds New Year's Eve blood drive

By Robert Tomlinson  
Staff Writer

THREE RIVERS — The American Red Cross' Bloodmobile rolled into Three Rivers one last time in 2019 on New Year's Eve, with a blood drive that was held at the Immaculate Conception Catholic School Tuesday.

The drive, held in the school's gymnasium building, was one of many Red Cross drives that have been held in Three Rivers throughout the year, with some of them being held at the Joco Center on Wood Street. Steve Swafford, supervisor for the team that handled Tuesday's drive, said they have different goals for different drives throughout the year.

"Goals are different every day, so depending on where you're at is the goal," Swafford said. "On Christmas, if you were at the Radisson's Holiday Drive, our goal was right around 170. Now today, our goal is about 20."

While Swafford said there isn't an urgent need for any blood types at the

moment, he said O-negative blood is one of the types the Red Cross is always looking for.

"I don't think we're currently under an appeal right now, but the need is always there. There are times that are greater than others," Swafford said. "O-negative's the universal blood type, and O-positive is a good one, too."

According to the Red Cross' website, there are specific requirements people need to meet in order to donate blood. People generally must be at least 17 years old in most states, in good health and feeling well, and weigh at least 110 pounds. During the process of registering to give blood, a confidential interview is held where questions about health history and travel are asked. The donation itself, according to the website, lasts about eight to 10 minutes and people give a pint of blood, equivalent to about 1 pound.

Many people who donated Tuesday, including Veronica Wooten of Three Rivers, did it because they wanted to help people who may be in need.

"I donate regularly, because it's the least

I can do," Wooten said. "I post on Facebook every time I come in to donate, and I hope it helps spread awareness about giving."

Mark Voegel of Constantine, who also donated on Tuesday, said he donates blood every two months.

"I don't necessarily enjoy it all the time, but it's something I can do to help people out, so I do it," Voegel said.

The next blood drive in Three Rivers is scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 21 at the UAW Local 2093 Hall at 15802 Hoffman Rd. from 10 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. The next one in St. Joseph County will be held at the Messiah Lutheran Church on 185 W. Fifth St. in Constantine on Friday, Jan. 10 from noon to 4:45 p.m.

Swafford said it's important for people to give blood if they can.

"Blood is a life-saving product," Swafford said. "People that have illnesses or accidents need it, and that's why it's important to give."

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## Three Rivers Health to host public flu clinic next week

THREE RIVERS — Approximately 200,000 Americans are hospitalized due to complications from the flu but Three Rivers Health is here to help.

The hospital is hosting a Public Flu Clinic in its St. Joseph Room on Friday, Jan. 10 and Monday, Jan. 13 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. No appointments are necessary but insurance cards will be required to get the flu vaccine.

Three Rivers Health will offer both the regular FluZone Quad (six months of age and older) and the High Dose (for those 65 years of age and older) vaccines, first come and first serve.

Attendees will need to sign a consent form and get registered prior to receiving a flu shot.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Chris Katsaros, a member of the Rotary Club of Three Rivers, presented Bridget with a certificate last spring for being one of five educators nominated by the Three Rivers Community Schools for Educator of the Year for the 2018-2019 school year.



PHOTO PROVIDED

With great strength and balance, Bridget, 39, performs a walking handstand at CrossFit in Three Rivers. "I feel I'm getting stronger and even more fit."

## Women on the Go profile: Bridget Griffioen

By William Allen Baltz  
Special to the Commercial-News

**Age:** 39  
**Status:** Married  
**Children:** Daughter in high school, son in college  
**Occupation:** Teacher  
**Avg. hours of exercise per week:** 15  
**Motto:** The best is yet to come.

THREE RIVERS — "Come on, Bridget, you got this...go!" calls out Coach Jen Finnerman during the Workout of the Day at the CrossFit gym in Three Rivers. It was dark and cold outside at 5:30 a.m. on a Friday morning, when five of us in the midst of our own challenging exercises turn to watch Bridget Griffioen walking on her hands with her legs up in the air.

She makes it to the third orange cone within the allotted time, rolls down to the floor and then stands up, her face slightly red, beaming with delight.

See BRIDGET GRIFFIOEN, page 3

## Police: Indiana man died in Michigan after kayaking accident

NILES, (AP) — A man who died after falling from a kayak into a southwestern Michigan river during a New Year's Day excursion with friends has been identified as an Indiana man.

Niles police said Thursday that Jean Claude Mutabazi, 40, of South Bend, was pronounced dead Wednesday after being pulled from the St. Joseph River following a four-hour search. The medical examiner's office is investigating his cause of death.

Police said Mutabazi was kayaking Wednesday morning with three other men, two of whom also fell into the river and were treated at a hospital for exposure to cold.

All four men were wearing personal flotation devices. Police

said Mutabazi was still wearing his when he was found trapped under a log that was stuck at the top of a dam.

Niles Fire Chief Larry Lamb said that shortly after launching their kayaks, the men apparently ran into trouble. He said he wasn't sure if the speed of the river's current contributed to the accident.

At the time of the accident, the water temperature was 39 degrees (3.88 Celsius) and the air temperature 25 degrees (minus -3.88 Celsius).

## US sending 3,000 more troops to Mideast as reinforcements

By Zeke Miller  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States said Friday it is sending nearly 3,000 more Army troops to the Mideast in the volatile aftermath of the killing of an Iranian general in a strike ordered by President Donald Trump.

Defense officials, who spoke on

condition of anonymity to discuss a decision not yet announced by the Pentagon, said the troops are from the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

They are in addition to about 700 soldiers from the 82nd Airborne who deployed to Kuwait earlier this week after the storming of the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad by Iran-backed militiamen and their supporters.

The reinforcements took shape as Trump gave his first comments on the strike, declaring that he ordered the killing of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani because he was "plotting to kill" many Americans. "He should have been taken out many years ago," he added.

The strike marked a major escalation in the conflict between Washington and Iran, as Iran vowed "harsh retaliation" for the killing of the

senior military leader. The two nations have faced repeated crises since Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and imposed crippling sanctions.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below

President Donald Trump said Friday that he ordered the killing of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani because he was "plotting to kill" many Americans.

In his first comments since the strike against the head of Iran's elite Quds Force early Friday, Trump said Soleimani was also responsible for killing and wounding "thousands" of Americans and many more in the region.

"He should have been taken out many years ago," Trump tweeted from his private club in Palm Beach, Florida, where he was vacationing.

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HAVE A GREAT DAY, EVERYONE!



TODAY'S WEATHER  
 HIGH: 41° LOW: 31°