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### MARTIN: A WINNER IN HOOPS AND LIFE

**Melinda Martin**, a freshman reserve guard on the Rider women's basketball team, gives it her all on the court to help the Broncs win games. Off the court, she strives just as hard to help people win the game of life.

Martin, a psychology major from Harrison Valley, Pa., helps save lives by donating platelets from her blood. She has also participated in Rider's Midnight Run program, traveling to New York City with a group of student volunteers to bring food and clothing to the homeless.

Martin began donating platelets as an extra-credit assignment for Dr. John Sheats' Chemistry and Contemporary Society class. She now gives platelets on a regular basis. "It's easy to do," said Martin, who continued to donate platelets during the basketball season. "I get a call every three weeks and I just go down to the blood center. It's really no big deal. "

But donating platelets is a big deal, according to Penny Moyer, assistant director of donor services at the Community Blood Council of New Jersey in Trenton, where Martin goes to give platelets. "It takes real special people to come in here on a monthly basis, devote two hours of their time, sit here with needles in both arms and help the sick," said Moyer.

Moyer explained that cancer and leukemia patients who undergo chemotherapy need platelet transfusions because the drugs they are taking also kill good cells, including the platelets that are vital to the blood's ability to clot. These patients may experience spontaneous bleeding from the gums, in the urine, and under the skin. Aplastic anemia patients usually require platelet transfusions to prevent fatal hemorrhaging due to low platelet counts. Platelet transfusions help prevent these types of bleeding.

Bone marrow transplant recipients are kept alive by numerous transfusions, including platelet transfusions, between the time the original marrow is destroyed and the transplanted marrow begins functioning, according to Moyer.

The process of donating platelets, known as apheresis, is more complex than that of giving whole blood, and takes between one and one-and-a-half hours.

After completing a screening process, the donor is placed in a comfortable chair and has sterile plastic tubing attached to each arm with needles. The donor's blood is drawn from one arm and runs through one tube into a bag in a cell-separating machine. The machine separates the needed platelets from the blood and returns the red blood cells and plasma to the donor through the tube attached to the other arm. The donor's blood never leaves the tubing, which is part of a single-use kit that fits inside the separator, and never comes into contact with the machine. This prevents the donor from being exposed to anyone else's blood.

Martin took part in Rider's first Midnight Run in September after seeing a flyer promoting it on campus. She was naturally interested in participating and enjoyed the experience. "It is so easy to become wrapped up in life here. It keeps things in perspective," she said. Martin also was able to get her teammates involved in that endeavor, convincing them to save their old basketball shoes and other clothes for the Midnight Run. By the time everything was collected, the team had filled up three boxes with clothes for the homeless.

Martin, who achieved a 4.0 grade point average during her first semester at Rider, is a native of Potter County in northern Pennsylvania and grew up just a few miles from Genesee, the hometown of women's basketball head coach Eldon Price. While attending Northern Potter High School, she served as president of her class, student council, and the National Honor Society. On the basketball court, Martin was named league most valuable player her junior and senior years and compiled 2,123 points during her scholastic career, which included one 54-point performance. She averaged 20.4 points, 4.1 rebounds, 2.6 assists and 3.8 steals for the basketball team, and also competed in cross country and track and field while in high school.