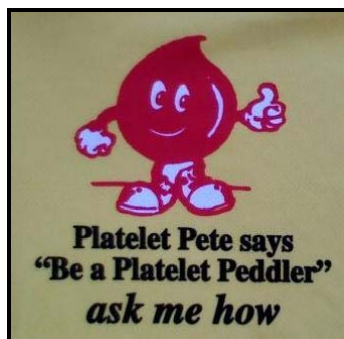


# Why I Donate

By [Matt Dillis](#)

I first heard about the need for platelet donations back in August of 2002. I was in Sturbridge, Mass for the start of my second [Pan-Mass Challenge](#) weekend. The Platelet Peddlers had an information table at the pre-ride expo and they were handing out Platelet Peddler cycling jerseys. I'm not sure, but I think they even had a guy dressed up as "Platelet Pete" wearing a fuzzy red platelet costume and posing for pictures – just the thing for a hot August afternoon. After getting some information (and a jersey) I headed off for the traditional PMC carb loading and opening ceremonies – absolutely ready to call and schedule my first platelet donation when the donor center opened on Monday morning.



I never made that call. Something came up on my schedule. Weeks went by, then months and before I knew it, it was August again – and I was back in Sturbridge and the Platelet Peddlers were there – again. Once again I committed to them and to myself that I was going to donate platelets...and something came up or I was just too busy with work and family. Flash forward to February 2006 and I was still "too busy". Of course, the truth was I didn't have anything that was so important I couldn't make time to donate platelets. The truth was (I'm embarrassed to say) I was afraid of needles – and pretty much anything to do with hospitals. The thought of a blood draw or even just the sight of someone in a white lab coat was enough to put me into a cold sweat. I could get past this when I absolutely needed to – though my wife is still shocked that I managed to stay vertical through the births of our kids...but this "fear" was enough to keep me from volunteering for a needle stick on a regular basis.

So there it was - February 2006 and I had just registered for my 6<sup>th</sup> PMC. I was on-line reading through stories about the PMC to help get me motivated for another year of training and fundraising. At some point I clicked on a link and ended up on a website for [Jack Ramsden](#), a 2-year old battling Stage IV Neuroblastoma. Jack's mom had been keeping a detailed journal – week-by-week and month-by-month since Jack's diagnosis in March 2004 – all the tests, treatments, and surgeries – all the ups and downs and how, through it all, Jack endured with an amazing spirit.

I never met Jack or his family, but the entries in Jack's Journal made their family's struggle all very real and very immediate. Any "inconvenience" or "discomfort" that I might experience donating platelets (turns out it really wasn't anything) would be absolutely trivial in comparison to what Jack and others like him go through every day. I picked up the phone and scheduled my first platelet donation.

Three years (and around 59 donations) later I sent a note to Jack's mom, Linda Ramsden, to thank her for sharing Jack's story and for helping me to always remember what a gift each day is.

Linda's note says it all...

*In his two years of treatment, we probably had about 30 red transfusions and 20 platelets. Without those donations, there were many firsts we would have never experienced. He would have left us when he was pre-verbal, and we would never know the sweetness of his voice, the compassion he put into words when telling US it would be okay and not to cry. We wouldn't have recordings of him telling us he loved us, over and over and over again. There is so much we would have never learned about who he was, and we owe those days to the many strangers who donated the gift of life. Of course we wish he was here with us now, but we continue to recognize what a gift our time with him was.*

*Thanks for your commitment!*

*Linda Ramsden*

To find out more about donating platelets contact the friendly folks at the [Dana-Farber Cancer Institute's Kraft Family Donor Center](#).



**Left to Right: Don, Rex, Mike, me and Someth at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute's Kraft Family Donor Center...you'll notice I'm much more comfortable here than in the photo below.**



**The Dunes in Provincetown - My 2nd PMC (2002)...aero bars, hybrid bike, stylin' helmet and my Platelet Peddler jersey.**