Ron Parker, his story: *It Could Happen to Anyone.*

"There are so many things I took for granted. While I had given blood myself, I did not realize how important it really is. Now I think, 'what if there was no available blood'. When someone gives blood, he or she is giving life to someone else. This sort of thing could happen to anyone"

In 2006, 52 year old Ron Parker was an active successful business man, husband and father. Ron, athletic, enjoyed working out, but one day he ruptured a disc in his lower back in a weight lifting accident. The injury required two back surgeries and nine months of recuperation. In spite of the fact that his back was healing and doing well, a year later, he still was not regaining his strength. By April 2008, he was feeling very weak and had shortness of breath. A thorough physical determined that he had a severe atrium arrhythmia with a heart rate over 160 beats per minute, double the normal rate. His red blood count was half what it should have been indicating he had internal bleeding. He was immediately admitted to Cardiac ICU to bring his heart under control and determine the cause of the bleeding.

The first step while in the hospital was to give Ron several units of blood to help restore his strength and reduce the stress on his heart. Ron said he could actually feel life being restored in his body while he regained his strength. Internal bleeding is very difficult to find, and several tests were performed. The blood loss was finally identified when a small pill-like camera was swallowed. It was eventually determined that the prolonged use of prescription and over the counter pain medications for his back injury had caused slow internal bleeding in his small intestine. Ron said that the bleeding was so gradual that he never saw any visible signs of blood. The significant loss of blood created a great deal of stress on Ron's heart triggering the arrhythmia. After a week in Cardiac ICU, he was released from the hospital, but his challenges were far from over.

In August of 2008, Ron underwent a very risky eight hour catheter surgery to cauterize the interior of the atrium of his heart. This surgery was tremendously successful and Ron is now free from any heart issues and lives without any medications.

None of that would have been possible if donor blood had not been available to allow Ron to get his strength back so he could tolerate the tests and surgeries. As a result of those units of blood and the surgical intervention, Ron is back to work full time and full of energy. He is looking forward to his son's graduation from college and up coming marriage. His daughter is working on a degree in music education and planning to go into the music ministry and teaching. Ron and his wife recently celebrated their 27th anniversary and couldn't be happier. Ron is again exercising, taking care of himself, and busy with his dad, designing and constructing homes.

After regaining his health, Ron joined the Rotary Club of Fort Worth South (Texas) to begin to give back to his community in thanks for all the donated blood he received.