

## Getting A New Leash On Life

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By John Sharify

BELLINGHAM - Walk into the Northwest Veterinary Blood Bank, you'll find the donors are happy. "I think this is a great idea to tell you the truth," says Robert Sharp.

Happy because they get treats. Right? "Yeah", says Robert.

But they're not treats for Robert, not that Robert doesn't like a treat once in a while. We're talking about his dog. Otto.



"Oh yeah, he gives him a big ol' can of food and a toy if he wants to bring it home," says Robert.

The blood donors at this Bellingham Blood Bank have wet noses, four legs, and I'm fairly certain, no clue.

"Okay, we're ready for Otto," says Veterinarian Edmund Sullivan. Hurricane Katrina showed us dogs need blood just like people do. Otto, a pit bull, is donating one unit. One unit provides blood for four dogs.

If Ouzo could talk she'd say: "Thanks".

Maybe. Hopefully.

Without the Northwest Veterinary Blood Bank, Ouzo wouldn't have survived emergency surgery.

"We're convinced of that," says Dr. Sullivan.

Ouzo lost massive amounts of blood from a liver tumor, and from the surgery. Not a problem, not here anyway. There's plenty of blood to go around at the Northwest Veterinary Blood Bank, one of the few in the Northwest. P> Otto's owner Robert, donates too. "I usually wait 'till Otto's ready to go," says Robert. He drops off Otto and goes to a human blood bank nearby.



The Bellingham clinic has about 50 dogs who donate blood regularly. Dr. Sullivan created the blood bank four years ago, after one of the worst nights of his life. That night, three dogs came in at once, and needed emergency surgery. Three dogs, but not enough blood.

"By morning, the little dog was ready to go home. And the two dogs died," says Dr. Sullivan.

Dr. Sullivan thought 'never again'. P> "That was sort of the last straw," says Dr. Sullivan.

And so a blood bank for dogs was born.

What a treat for Otto! While he's asleep, Otto gets his nails done, his ears and mouth cleaned.

"He probably doesn't think that's a big perk," says Dr. Sullivan with a smile.

But his big perk comes when he wakes up. Otto has to like this. A big bowl of dog food! Yummy.

It's gone in 7 seconds flat. His reward for helping other dogs get a new leash on life.

If you would like more information about the Northwest Veterinary Blood Bank, or to become a donor, call 360-752-5554 or go to [www.northwestbloodbank.com](http://www.northwestbloodbank.com)