April immunodeficiency month

By the Times Staff

A Batavia woman is displaying copies of a proclamation signed by Gov. Mike Beebe earlier this month. She tacked a proclamation to a board in the Boone County Courthouse and left a copy at North Arkansas Regional Medical Center. The document proclaims April 2008 “Primary Immunodeficiency Diseases Awareness Month.”

Carol King of Batavia is a volunteer for the Immune Deficiency Foundation; she suffers from a primary immunodeficiency disease, specifically a disease called common variable immunodeficiency.

According to the foundation’s tract, “People with primary immunodeficiencies are more susceptible to infections and health problems that lead to serious and debilitating diseases. It is critical to get an early diagnosis and proper medical care.

King said physicians in Phoenix, Ariz., diagnosed her with an Immunoglobulin deficiency when she lived there in 1992. “At that time, my IGA was on the low end of normal.”

Over the next 9 1/2 years, she sick all the time, suffering through a battery of infections, usually sinus and respiratory. Four years ago, doctors at Children’s Hospital actually diagnosed her disease and prescribed treatment.

She now gives herself intravenous immunoglobulin therapy treatments twice weekly at home. “I don’t get sick like I used to,” she remarked. “I went through the whole winter without antibiotics. To not take antibiotics feels real good.”

She said 1 - 120,000 and 1 - 150,000 Americans have an immunodeficiency disease, everything from her case to the case of a boy made famous as the “boy in the bubble.” She said the disease is usually hereditary, although environmental issues are possible.

Gov. Beebe’s proclamation points to the World Health Organization’s recognition of more than 150 primary immunodeficiency diseases, and the 250,000 Americans affected.

His proclamation encourages Arkansans to learn more about these serious and often undiagnosed diseases, to participate in the special activities planned to bring public awareness to the crucial health matter and to provide support and care for those whose lives are affected by these devastating diseases.”