

The heart of the matter

ACH to hold 'Go Red' event as part of American Heart Month

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Just as pink pops up in October, red is the color of February — and though it is related to hearts, it is not because of Valentine's Day.

February is American Heart Month and has become Go Red for Women Month to raise awareness for how heart disease impacts the mothers, sisters, aunts and daughters of the world.

Red was especially on display Friday, National Go Red Day, when not only individuals sported the bright color, but even landmarks and buildings were lit up red in major cities in order to make a dramatic point.

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), heart disease is the No. 1 killer of women, taking more lives than all forms of cancer combined. The AHA claims heart disease causes one in three deaths each year — approximately one woman

every minute.

Go Red was founded in 2004 to bring this issue to light, and AHA estimates that 627,000 lives have been saved and many women have made positive lifestyle changes since then.

"After a decade, we're proud to say that we've reached millions of women across the nation with the same

urgent message — that heart disease is their No. 1 health threat," said Nancy Brown, CEO of the American Heart Association. "I know we can achieve

even more on behalf of the 43 million women who currently are affected by heart disease, and in the future we can help many more women prevent the development of heart disease."

The biggest message being presented is that women should know their risk of heart disease and make healthy lifestyle changes to help prevent them from becoming a statistic.



Submitted Photo

From left, Teresa Lattanzi; Dr. Debra Lehrer, senior vice president of Planetree Leadership; and Susan Lucas, director of Public Relations/Foundation at Alliance Community Hospital, hold signs representing the statistic that one in three women die each year in the United States due to heart disease.

The website goredforwomen.org has plenty of educational information to help women learn more, including a "Heart Checkup" quiz to

find risk factors and information on how to manage these risks at any age.

Locally, Alliance Community Hospital is planning its own educational event, to be held Feb. 20 at Alliance High School.

In partnership with AHA, "Alliance Goes Red: An Evening for Women" is being offered to "empower the community, especially women, with the knowledge and tools they need to make positive lifestyle changes to help reduce their risk of heart disease."

"Alliance Community Hospital is excited to be part of getting the Go Red movement started in our community," said Susan Lucas, director of Public Relations/Foundation at ACH. "Creating awareness with an event such as this is the first step in making meaningful changes for the women in our lives."

Dr. Debra Lehrer, senior vice president of Planetree Leadership, who has been

instrumental in planning this event, said cardiovascular disease is a big issue in the community. "ACH, along with the AHA, is proud to have three local physicians volunteer to participate in an evening of education to promote women's heart health," she said.

Amber Somerville, M.D., obstetrics and gynecology; John Prodafikas, M.D., cardiology; and Ashraf Ahmed, M.D., internal medicine, will be on hand to speak during the event that will take place from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Feb. 20 at Alliance High School.

"I would encourage our community to come out and participate in the evening," Lehrer said. "Bring your heart-related questions and help us raise community awareness."

To RSVP for this free event, call 330-596-7575 by Tuesday. For more information, visit www.achosp.org.

To learn more about heart disease, visit www.heart.org.

Common Myths About Heart Disease

Myth: Heart disease is for men, and cancer is the real threat for women.

Fact: Heart disease is a killer that strikes more women than men, and is more deadly than all forms of cancer combined. While one in 31 American women dies from breast cancer each year, heart disease claims the lives of one in three. That's roughly one death each minute.

Myth: Heart disease is for old people.

Fact: Heart disease affects women of all ages. For younger women, the combination of birth control pills and smoking boosts heart disease risks by 20 percent. And while the risks do increase with age, things like overeating and a sedentary lifestyle can cause plaque to accumulate and lead to clogged arteries later in life. But even if you lead a completely healthy lifestyle, being born with an underlying heart condition can be a risk factor.

Myth: Heart disease doesn't affect women who are fit.

Fact: Even if you're a yoga-loving, marathon-running workout fiend, your risk for heart disease isn't completely eliminated. Factors like cholesterol, eating habits and smoking can counterbalance your other healthy habits. You can be thin and have high cholesterol. The American Heart Association recommends you start get-

ting your cholesterol checked at age 20, or earlier, if your family has a history of heart disease. And while you're at it, be sure to keep an eye on your blood pressure at your next check-up.

Myth: I am fine because I don't have any symptoms.

Fact: Sixty-four percent of women who die suddenly of coronary heart disease had no previous symptoms. Because these symptoms vary greatly between men and women, they're often misunderstood. Media has conditioned us to believe that the telltale sign of a heart attack is extreme chest pain. But in reality, women are somewhat more likely to experience shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain. Other symptoms women should look out for are dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting, pain in the lower chest or upper abdomen and extreme fatigue.

Myth: Heart disease runs in my family, so there's nothing I can do about it.

Fact: Although women with a family history of heart disease are at higher risk, there's plenty you can do to dramatically reduce it. Simply create an action plan to keep your heart healthy.

SOURCE:

www.goredforwomen.org



Amazing facts about the human heart

Every Valentine's Day, homes and businesses dress up the decor with cupids and hearts to celebrate a day all about love and affection. The heart shape has been used to symbolically represent the human heart as the center of emotion and romantic love. Hearts symbolizing love can be traced back to the Middle Ages.

Those familiar with human anatomy realize that an actual heart bares very little resemblance to the ideographic heart shape used in art and imagery. Similarly, the human heart really has nothing to do with human emotions. Despite this, there are many interesting components of the heart, and a man or woman truly cannot love or live without one.

The heart as an organ is relatively small in size. It is roughly the size of a fist and weighs only 11 ounces on average. Although diminutive, the heart is responsible for pumping 2,000 gallons of blood through 60,000 miles of blood vessels each day. It accomplishes this by beating 72 times a minute in a

healthy adult. All of the cells in the body receive blood except for the corneas in the eye.

The heart works harder than any other muscle in the body. In a fetus, it begins beating at four weeks after conception and will not stop until a person's time of death. Even then, sometimes the heart can be revived. A heart can also continue to beat outside of the body provided it has an adequate oxygen supply.

Although many people refer to all of the blood vessels in their body as "veins," they're actually a combination of veins and arteries. Veins carry fresh, oxygenated blood to the body through arteries. The main artery leaving the left heart ventricle is called the aorta, while the main artery leaving the right ventricle is known as the pulmonary artery. Blood traveling back to the heart flows through veins after it has passed the lungs to pick up oxygen. The thumping noise that is heard while the heart is beating is actually the chambers of the heart

closing and opening as blood flows through.

While the heart may not be the cornerstone of emotions, it can be affected by feelings. Studies have shown that a "broken heart" is a real occurrence, according to Live Science. Bad news or a breakup with a loved one can put a person at increased risk for heart attack. This type of trauma releases stress hormones into the body that can stun the heart. Chest pain and shortness of breath ensue, but can be remedied after some rest.

Conversely, laughter and positive feelings can be beneficial for the heart. Research has shown that a good laughing fit can cause the lining of the blood vessel walls — called the endothelium — to relax. This helps increase blood flow for up to 45 minutes afterward.

Although having a big heart colloquially means that a person is loving and goes out of their way for others, physically speaking, a big heart is unhealthy. An enlarged heart can be a sign of heart disease and com-



Photo Courtesy of Metro Creative

Though it is synonymous with love and emotion, the heart is a hard-working muscle that is responsible for sustaining life.

promise the heart's ability to pump blood effectively. Left untreated, it can lead to heart failure.

The heart is an amazing organ responsible for sus-

taining life. Although it is not directly tied to love and emotions, without the heart such feelings wouldn't be possible.

Courtesy of Metro Creative