



American
Heart
Association.

Cor Vitae
Society

The Pulse

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**The American Heart Association
promotes *Reclaim Your Rhythm***

Survivors Share Stories to Empower Others

**Society members make lasting impact
in their communities**

**Mission in Action: How the American
Heart Association is making real change**



*Donald M. Lloyd-Jones, M.D., ScM, FACC, FAHA
President, American Heart Association, 2021-22
Member, Cor Vitae Society*

LEADERSHIP LETTER

With everything that has happened over the past two years, many people have gotten out of step when it comes to cardiovascular health and well-being. In a world turned upside down by COVID-19, they found themselves exercising less, eating unhealthy foods, using alcohol and tobacco, and stressing like never before.

Now is the time to *Reclaim Your Rhythm*, and the American Heart Association is here to help this Heart Month, celebrated annually in February.

We're inspiring everyone to make small changes that have an enduring impact on their physical and mental health, and there's no better medium to convey that message than music — the universal language.

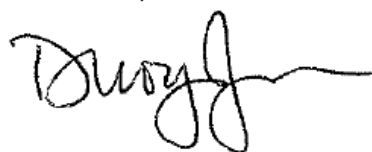
Through activities, including a monthlong takeover of Pandora's Dance Cardio Radio, we'll get you moving and grooving, wearing your red to raise awareness and taking actions that give you the best chance at a longer, healthier life.

Our national Heart Month campaign focuses on five calls-to-action:

- **Mellow Out and Reduce Stress** — Stress leads to unhealthy habits like overeating, physical inactivity and smoking.
- **Move to the Groove** — Physical activity is linked to lower chronic disease rates, higher cognitive function, stronger bones and muscles and a greater sense of mental well-being.
- **Feed Your Soul, Rock Your Recipes** — Eat meals together as a family for a chance to connect and decompress.
- **Stay on Beat and Know Your Blood Pressure Numbers** — High blood pressure is a leading cause and controllable risk factor for heart disease and stroke.
- **Keep the Beat! Learn Hands-Only CPR** — When a person has a cardiac arrest, survival depends on immediately receiving CPR from someone nearby.

Join us this February to *Reclaim Your Rhythm* as we all get back on beat.

With heart,



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Reclaim
Your
Rhythm



MAKE MOVES TODAY

Take a stand. Wear red and give. Together we can change the statistics and help women create the healthy habits they need to have their best chance at life.

**Learn more at
[WearRedDay.org](https://www.WearRedDay.org)**

Go Red for Women is
nationally sponsored by


American Heart Association.

for women.

SURVIVOR SPOTLIGHT

12 Survivors Share Stories to Empower Others



Members of the 2022 Class of Go Red for Women Real Women

Each year, Go Red for Women selects a class of Real Women — heart disease and stroke survivors who share their personal experiences to raise awareness and inspire women around the globe.

From a jet-setting model to a community nurse and an entrepreneur to a CPR trainer, these women are sharing their stories to help save others.

They are new moms, members of communities, friends and family. And they share one thing in common: Heart disease forever changed their lives.



Scan to hear the women tell their stories or visit GoRedforWomen.org/RealWomen. ■

Take back control of your physical health and mental well-being this Heart Month



Join us this February as we unite for American Heart Month. We'll help you *Reclaim Your Rhythm* to fight heart disease — because losing even one mom, brother, friend or neighbor is too many.

The AHA is rallying communities with an urgent message to create healthy habits and commit to health goals. We'll be right here to guide you and help keep your rhythm flowing — with the tools to get you started and the tunes to keep you on track. We'll get you moving and grooving to raise awareness and take actions that work best for your life, to give you the best chance at life.

Learn how you can *Reclaim Your Rhythm* today at heart.org. ■

Cocoa could bring sweet relief to walking pain for people with peripheral artery disease

Consumption of cocoa may improve walking performance for patients with peripheral artery disease, according to the results of a research trial published Feb. 14, 2020, in the American Heart Association's journal *Circulation Research*.

In a small study of 44 peripheral artery disease patients over age 60, those who drank a beverage containing flavanol-rich cocoa three times a day for six months were able to walk up to 42.6 meters further in a 6-minute walking test, compared to those who drank the same number and type of beverages without cocoa. Those who drank the flavanol-rich cocoa also had improved blood flow to their calves and some improved muscle function compared to the placebo group.

Peripheral artery disease or PAD, a narrowing of the arteries that reduces blood flow from the heart to the legs, affects over 8.5 million people 40 years of age and older nationwide. The most common symptoms are pain, tightness, cramping, weakness or other discomfort in leg muscles in while walking.

Researchers hypothesized that epicatechin, a major flavanol component of cocoa, may increase mitochondrial activity and muscle health in the calves of patients with lower extremity peripheral artery disease, potentially improving patient walking ability. Epicatechins and flavanols also have the potential to improve blood flow.

The cocoa used in the study is commonly available natural unsweetened cocoa powder, which is rich in the flavanol epicatechin, found in larger quantities in dark chocolate (>85% cacao) than in milk chocolate. Regular chocolate would not be expected to have the same effect.

"If our results are confirmed in a larger trial, these findings suggest that cocoa, a relatively inexpensive, safe and accessible product, could potentially produce significant improvements in calf muscle health, blood flow, and walking performance for PAD patients," said lead study author Mary McDermott, M.D., the Jeremiah Stamler professor of medicine and preventive medicine at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University in Chicago.



Chocolate Nut Cookie in a Mug

Serving Size 1 cookie

Ingredients

- 1 1 tablespoon trans-fat-free tub margarine
- 10 drops chocolate-flavored liquid stevia sweetener
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon egg white
- 1 tablespoon chopped walnuts
- OR
- 1 tablespoon chopped pecans

Directions

1. Put the margarine in a small microwaveable mug, ramekin, or custard cup. Microwave on 100 percent power (high) for 10 seconds, or just until the margarine is melted. Stir in the liquid stevia sweetener and the cocoa powder. Gradually stir in the flour until well blended. Stir in the egg white and nuts until well blended.
2. Microwave on 100 percent power (high) for 45 seconds, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
3. Let cool for 5 minutes.

For more American Heart Association recipes, visit [recipes.heart.org](https://www.heart.org/recipes).

Blood pressure levels increased during pandemic

by AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION NEWS

A recent study shows the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with higher blood pressure levels among middle-aged adults across the U.S.

According to the American Heart Association, nearly half of American adults have high blood pressure, a leading cause of heart disease, and nearly 75% of all cases remain above the recommended blood pressure levels. Stay-at-home orders were implemented across the U.S. between March and April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in a shift to remote health care for numerous chronic health conditions including high blood pressure and had a negative impact on healthy lifestyle behaviors for many people.

“At the start of the pandemic, most people were not taking good care of themselves. Increases in blood pressure were likely related to changes in eating habits, increased alcohol consumption, less physical activity, decreased medication adherence, more emotional stress and poor sleep,” said lead study author Luke J. Laffin, M.D., co-director of the Center for Blood Pressure Disorders at the Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio. “And we know that even small rises in blood pressure increase one’s risk of stroke and other adverse cardiovascular disease events.”

The analysis found:

- During the pandemic (April to December 2020), average increases in blood pressure each month ranged from 1.10 to 2.50 mm Hg higher for systolic blood pressure (the top number in a blood pressure reading that indicates how much pressure the blood is exerting against the artery walls with each contraction) and 0.14 to 0.53 mm Hg for diastolic blood pressure (the bottom number

in a blood pressure reading indicates how much pressure the blood is exerting against the artery walls while the heart is resting, between contractions) compared to the same time period in 2019. Before the pandemic, blood pressure measures were largely unchanged when comparing study years.

- Higher increases in blood pressure measures were seen among women for both systolic and diastolic blood pressure, among older participants for systolic blood pressure, and in younger participants for diastolic blood pressure.
- From April to December 2020, compared to the pre-pandemic time period, more participants (26.8%) were re-categorized to a higher blood pressure category, while only 22% of participants moved to a lower blood pressure category.

The study authors are following up on these results to find out if this trend continued in 2021, which may indicate a forthcoming wave of strokes and heart attacks. ■

Blood Pressure Categories



BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120-129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130-139	or	80-89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

heart.org/bplevels

SOCIETY MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Cyrus Jones, Jr. | Baltimore, Maryland

CHAMPION'S CIRCLE



Cyrus Jones, Jr.

When Cyrus “Cy” Jones Jr. began his third NFL season in 2019 with the Denver Broncos, he thought he was simply experiencing elevation sickness after moving from the east coast to the Mile High City.

But team doctors discovered it was much more — an anomalous coronary artery, a heart defect that causes an artery to grow in the wrong position of the heart.

Cy was shocked. He was a standout scholar and athlete in high school and earned a scholarship to play football at the University of Alabama, where he graduated in three years before beginning his NFL career.

Cy was placed on the reserved player list. After consulting with physicians, he had open-heart surgery.

Now recovered, Cy hopes to return to the NFL. Meanwhile, he’s teaming up with the American Heart Association.

“I have spent my entire life as a part of organizations bigger than myself and the AHA has become another one of those organizations,” Cy said. “I support the AHA because it has provided me with a new team-like environment.”

In addition to supporting the AHA, Cy also started the Cy Jones Foundation, which is committed to community service and youth empowerment.

“The AHA provides the community with health education and champions lifesaving research for physicians and medical professionals to save lives like mine. I am proud to be a Cor Vitae Society Champion Circle member and volunteer with the organization,” Cy said. ■

Congenital Heart Defect

A congenital heart defect is a structural heart problem that’s present at birth. Such defects result when a mishap occurs during heart development soon after conception — often before the mother is aware that she’s pregnant.

Anyone can have a child with CHD. Out of 1,000 births, at least eight babies have some form of a congenital heart disorder, most of which are mild.

These problems may or may not have a disruptive effect on the circulatory system. But having a congenital heart defect can increase risk of certain medical conditions.

Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week is Feb. 7-14. Learn more about CHD at heart.org.

SOCIETY MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Mary Ferry, Rachel Barber and Elizabeth Gank | Youngstown, Ohio

CHAMPION'S CIRCLE



Mary Ferry, Rachel Barber and Elizabeth Gank

For the Ferry family, support for the American Heart Association spans three generations.

Matriarch Mary Ferry has lived with high blood pressure and high cholesterol since age 30. Even though she's led an active lifestyle, she needed a quadruple bypass in 2019 due to four blocked arteries. Shortly following the surgery, Mary experienced ventricular fibrillation, a rapid and life-threatening heart rhythm that caused a heart attack and cardiac arrest.

Thankfully, after being revived, she's doing well.

"I believe my mom is with us today because of her strong determination to survive and due to the cardiovascular research from the American Heart Association," said Rachel Barber, Mary's daughter. "If it wasn't for the money raised during events such as the Heart Ball or the Heart Walk, there would be no research. And without research, there would be no survivors."

Rachel, the executive vice president of finance with VEC, Inc., began volunteering with the AHA in Youngstown, Ohio, over two decades ago as a member of the Executive Leadership Team for Heart Ball. She also served on the Executive Leadership Team for Heart Walk, chaired the Heart Ball in 2011 and 2012 and joined the AHA Tri-County Board of Directors, serving as chair from 2015 through June 2021.

A founding member of [Circle of Red](#) in Youngstown, Rachel is passionate about women's health and the work of the AHA.

Rachel's daughter, Elizabeth Gank, has continued the Ferry's altruistic tradition. She served on the Heart Ball Auction Committee and the Executive Leadership Team for Heart Walk in 2019. She recently committed to being a Woman of Impact for 2022.

Grateful for the work of the AHA, Mary, Rachel and Elizabeth are excited to continue their philanthropic legacy. ■

Raising awareness

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of women — claiming more lives than all forms of cancer combined.

That's why it's critical to know your health numbers that help determine risk for heart disease: total cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar and body mass index. It's also important to know your family's health history and talk to your doctor about heart disease and stroke.

Take charge of your health to lower your risk for heart disease with [Go Red for Women tools and resources](#) on physical activity, healthy eating, controlling blood pressure and managing sleep and stress.

SOCIETY MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Ed and Murphy Romano | Los Angeles, CA

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE



Ed and Murphy Romano

Ed and Murphy Romano's relationship with the American Heart Association began two years ago with a memorial gift in honor of their late daughter, Lindsay.

Since then, they've become passionate champions of the AHA.

"We understand the importance of the AHA work in order to help people live more productive lives," Ed said. "Now more than ever, it's critical to support the bright minds both in research and clinical care."

The former vice chairman of Warner Bros, Ed knows the importance of leadership. He joined the AHA Board of Directors in Los Angeles and recruited a chair for the Go Red for Women campaign while serving on its Executive Leadership Team.

In addition to their time, the Romanos have given generously to fund breakthroughs in science and technology, innovating systems of care, strengthening local and national health policy and advocating for health equity.

The couple made a significant donation to Go Red for Women and recently announced an additional gift in honor of their friends.

The Romanos believe raising awareness empowers women to combat their No. 1 health threat.

"Despite how far we've come, heart disease still claims far too many lives," Murphy said. "Working together with the AHA, we are confident we can help make a difference." ■

Research Goes Red

The AHA's Go Red for Women and Verily's Project Baseline are empowering more women to participate in scientific research.

The vision for Research Goes Red is to create the world's most engaged and largest women's health registry and platform for research. More women in studies can help narrow knowledge gaps about gender and ethnicity in heart disease and stroke. The more we know about women's health and well-being, the better we can treat, beat and prevent heart disease and stroke. Learn more at projectbaseline.com/studies/gored/.

MISSION IN ACTION

\$65,000 awarded to women-led health initiatives

Three social entrepreneurs and their ventures — meeting needs as elemental as better breathing, rescue training and personal health and well-being — were celebrated this fall in the American Heart Association's EmPOWERED to Serve Business Accelerator Finale.

A panel of expert judges chose Sharon Samjitsingh, co-founder of Health Care Originals Inc. in Rochester, New York, to receive the first-place, \$50,000 grant. Deploying a proprietary wearable device, Health Care Originals pursues better collection and analysis of real-world lung data from a diverse group of patients. The technology is impacting clinical trials in areas such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and interstitial lung disease, as well as allowing patients to receive on-demand feedback on their conditions.

The second-place grant of \$10,000 was awarded to Cornelia Williams, co-founder of EMTomorrow in Essex, Massachusetts. EMTomorrow, a nonprofit, provides free EMT training to under-resourced young adults, helping them overcome financial, social, geographic and hiring barriers on the path to a career in emergency medical services. Williams is an emergency medical technician, senior at Georgetown University and director of organizational equity for Georgetown EMS.

In online voting before and during the finale, Kimberly Brown, founder of Get Up Get Movin' in Minneapolis, was chosen as Fan Favorite. Informed by her own health struggles, Brown created Get Up Get Movin' to provide information, motivation and a 30-day nutrition and physical activity challenge aimed at communities of color and church congregations. Brown, a singer/songwriter, was awarded a \$5,000 grant for her project.



First-place grant recipient Sharon Samjitsingh describes her project, Health Care Originals Inc., during the EmPOWERED to Serve Business Accelerator Finale in October.

Other finalists (and their ventures/locations) were:

- Shireen Abdullah (Yumlish/Dallas)
- Bahby Banks (Pillar Consulting/Durham, North Carolina)
- Victoria Beaty (Growing Places/Indianapolis)
- Maya Page (Carry/Portland, Oregon)
- Cynthia Wallace (Bible Center Church/Pittsburgh)

The EmPOWERED to Serve Business Accelerator works with diverse social entrepreneurs and organizations to improve community health risk factors, especially for under-resourced populations. Such factors include racial bias, income, education, stress, pollution, housing availability, transportation and access to healthy foods.

Since 2017, the AHA Business Accelerator has funded over \$500,000 in grants for health and social justice leaders. ■

MISSION IN ACTION

Recognize signs and call 911 for heart attack and cardiac arrest

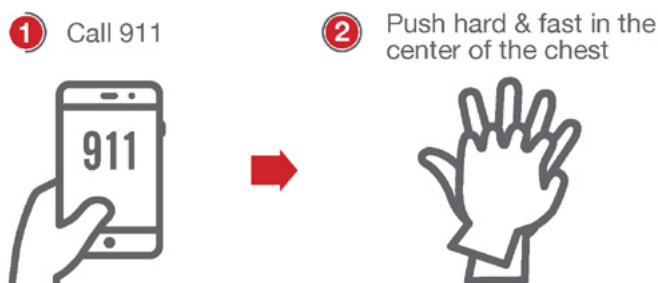
A heart attack is caused by a blockage that stops blood flow to the heart. It's a serious circulation problem that's sometimes fatal.

Heart attack is often mistaken for cardiac arrest. While a heart attack may cause cardiac arrest, the two aren't the same.

A cardiac arrest is when the heart's electrical system malfunctions. The heart stops beating properly when its pumping function is "arrested," or stopped. It can happen suddenly or in the wake of other symptoms.

A cardiac arrest, which occurs outside a hospital more than 356,000 times each year in the U.S., can quickly result in death. But it may be reversed if CPR is performed and a defibrillator shocks the heart and restores a normal heart rhythm within a few minutes.

Hands-Only CPR has two steps: Call 911 and push hard and fast in the center of the chest.



Don't delay responding to warning signs of a heart attack. It can be sudden and intense. But most start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. So pay attention to your body and call 911 if you experience:

- **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or it may go away

and then return. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.

- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath.** This can occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other possible signs** include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

Every second matters. Fast action to react and call 911 can save lives — maybe yours. ■





American
Heart
Association.

Cor Vitae Society

THE HEART OF LIFE

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5 Ways Pets Help with Stress and Mental Health

- 1. Pets can reduce work-related stress.** Two out of three employees say work stresses them out and 40% say their job gets in the way of their health. Studies show that pets in the workplace help reduce stress and improve employee satisfaction.
- 2. Pets can help increase productivity, wherever you work.** When a dog joins a virtual meeting, group members rank their teammates higher on trust, team cohesion and camaraderie.
- 3. Pets help manage anxiety.** Now more than ever, many people are feeling anxious or struggling with mental health. Pets provide companionship and support.
- 4. Pets can help you be more active.** They give you a reason to get outside, get some fresh air and get active, which is proven to improve your mood, sleep and mental health.



- 5. Pets provide a sense of togetherness.** The bond with a pet helps you to not feel alone. When owners see, touch, hear or talk to their companion animals, it brings a sense of goodwill, joy, nurturing and happiness.

Join The Conversation



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