

944



Red is the New Black

February 1, 2010

www.944.com

Fearless San Diego Woman Gather for a Cause That Couldn't Be Any Closer to Their Hearts

Written by: Teri Miyahira Photography By: Karen Morrison



It's not breast cancer that's the biggest risk for women these days. Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of women; about 90 percent of all women in the U.S. have one or more risk factors for developing heart disease, and every minute one woman dies of the disease. Scary, huh?

The good news is that 80 percent of cardiac events can be prevented. That's why the San Diego chapter of the American Heart Association urges women (both young and young at heart) to be aware of heart disease and show support by participating in the National Wear Red Day on February 5, as well as its esteemed annual Go Red for Women luncheon on February 12 at the Hotel Del Coronado — in partnership with 944. For added inspiration, we rounded up brave San Diego women who have battled heart disease firsthand, and share their heartfelt stories.

THE MANAGER

Theresa LaTosh, Community Relations Manager at Classic Residence by Hyatt

When: Cerebral Vascular Accident (stroke) at age 45, two days after the 9/11 attacks.

How: "It took a while to get to a hospital because I didn't know it was a stroke," LaTosh says. "It was a week in the hospital, months of rehab and tenacity from my husband to make me do all the exercises required."

Today: "I encourage others to live healthy, active lives and promote the merits of repetitious therapy to help build new pathways for brain function," she says.

THE BUSINESS OWNER

Holly G. Green, Business Owner and Author

When: Heart attack in March 2009, three stents inserted.

How: “It has been a roller-coaster-ride filled with emotional and physical ups and downs,” says Green. “One thing so many people have said is ‘slow down.’”

Today: “It made me want to suck everything I can out of what this world has to offer so I can give as much back as possible,” she says. “It makes me want to make sure I am living in a way that my children will remember and be proud of. It makes me want to love my friends and family even more so there are no questions when I am gone. Supporting others in their success — that is what keeps my spirits high and able to ride whatever roller coaster comes my way.”

Advice: “Don’t deny symptoms. Don’t put off going to the doctor because you don’t think it is a big deal. Don’t pretend nothing is wrong,” she says.

THE MBA STUDENT

Bridget Winandy, MBA Student and Scripps Health Employee

When: Had an inuteri stroke before birth on the right side of the brain that affected the left side of the body.

How: “My situation is unique because it affected everything from communication to cutting a piece of steak to brushing my hair and typing with only my right hand,” says Winandy. “At times, I can be more emotional and if I have the slightest thought I am not doing well, I make a doctor’s appointment to be proactive so that no more health problems arrive in my life.”

Today: “I overcame the feeling by attending support groups, reading materials regarding the cause and made efforts to move forward. My situation has no cure. A goal of mine is to allow and show other survivors, like myself, how to go to college and live a normal life,” she says.

Advice: “Remain positive and think the impossible. I believe and continue to hope to feel my left side one day,” she says.

THE TV PERSONALITY

Brooke Landau, Channel 6 Weathercaster

When: Diagnosed with Congenital Heart Disease at birth, open-heart surgery at 16 months old.

How: “I was born blue and continued to turn blue for a year and a half until my surgery,” says Landau. “My surgery was a very trying time for my parents since I crashed in the ICU while trying to recover. Doctors tried to revive me and tried to shock my heart but with no success.

They had to immediately open me up again and repair the valve a second time. Since then, I’ve been heart-healthy.”

Today: “I have battled unimaginable health challenges, but I’ve survived because I have a relentless hope that things can always get better no matter how grim the odds may seem,” she says.

Advice: “Listen to your instincts, that little voice in your head. You have to know your body and be your own best advocate for your health,” she says.

THE DOCTOR

Leslie Giesemann, M.D., FACS, Board Certified General/Trauma and Critical Care Surgeon

When: Diagnosed in 1991 at age 24 with Kawasaki’s disease.

How: “While hospitalized, I was able to see how my illness upset those around me, and was inspired by the care and compassion of not only my family and friends but that of the medical

staff, fellow patients and their families,” says Giesemann.

Today: “Since it was my second year of medical school when I underwent heart surgery, I consider my experience to have given me a rare insight into a patient’s experience,” she says. “I have lived through the feelings of helplessness, as well as hope, that many heart disease patients feel. My experience allows me to empathize with my patients from a unique viewpoint.”

THE PUBLIC SPEAKER

Melissa Garner Mitchell (with daughter Cadence),
Public Speaker and Writer

When: Diagnosed at birth with a form of Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) called Atrial Septal Defect and heart block in 1969. First open-heart surgery in 1974. Diagnosed with third degree heart block and a pacemaker placed in 2006. Will have another pacemaker surgery this year.

How: “My life was fairly normal given the extraordinary amount of medical care I received,” says Mitchell. “I am more affected by having two children with congenital heart disease. My 4-year-old daughter Cadence had three open heart surgeries, one closed heart surgery and a pacemaker. My 7-year-old son also has a pacemaker. We’ve had 16 heart surgeries between us.”

Today: “‘It is what it is,’ is the statement I live by,” she says. “I can only do what is in my power. But I can be the best mother and caregiver for my children and advocate for them. It’s very hard to watch both my children be so sick. But as long as they are happy, experiencing the beauty of life and are good human beings, I know I’ve done my job.”

Advice: “If your child is diagnosed with CHD, just do the best you can do,” she says. “Don’t panic. Make the hospital fun; be creative. We go to our hospital for lunch and playground time even when we don’t have appointments. Sounds crazy, but my children are never afraid of the hospital or doctors.”

THE TEENAGER

Danielle Frasier, Student onward bound to Stanford, recently named Captain to Union-Tribune’s All-Academic Team for high school sports, Rolex Junior All-American

When: Diagnosed in 2005 at age 13 with SVT (rapid heart rate), and surgery in 2006.

How: “SVT affected my life because I would experience episodes of shortness of breath, dizziness and a pounding heart that would reach 270 beats per minute, multiple times a day,” says Frasier. “I am a competitive golfer and these episodes kept me from both living a normal life and playing the game I loved.”

Today: “SVT is not preventable but is treatable, but I think it is important that people are educated that this problem can happen. Many people attribute SVT to anxiety and stress, and therefore it sometimes goes unnoticed. I am proud to be a part of the American Heart Association, both as a volunteer and an advocate,” she says.

MARK THE CALENDAR

February 5 // National Wear Red Day

Show your support of the Go Red for Women movement and the many women battling heart disease by wearing red all day. Red lipstick counts, too.

February 12 // Annual Go Red for Women Luncheon

Join San Diego’s most prominent women leaders in the local business community for a heart-healthy luncheon, including breakout sessions, inspiring speakers and a “Project RED Runway,”

with proceeds going directly back to the cause. Learn more at www.sdgored.org.

USEFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

www.americanheart.org | Learn about heart attack warning signs, advice for both patients and caregivers, and easy steps to simply start living better and longer.

www.goredforwomen.org | Check out this national site for everything you want to know and more about the Go Red for Women movement, from how to donate to speaking up about the cause to how to obtain a FREE red dress pin to wear in support.

Top Nine Ways to Love Your Heart

ONE // Maintain a healthy and balanced diet.

Snack healthfully with fruit, yogurt or a granola bar instead of grabbing a candy bar or chips, which are full of calories and bad fats.

TWO // Don't overeat.

When eating out, share an entree making it easier on the pocketbook and the heart.

THREE // Achieve the proper weight for your body.

Maintain a level of physical activity that achieves fitness while balancing caloric intake. Burning more energy (calories) than what the body takes in is the only way to lose weight.

FOUR // Quit smoking.

It's a cause for heart disease as well as lung cancer, so avoid the double-whammy.

FIVE // Exercise regularly.

The American Heart Association recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity exercise such as brisk walking, swimming or biking at least five days per week to keep the heart strong and healthy.

SIX // Remember it can be done anywhere.

It's not necessary to join a gym. Short on time? Remember that 30 consecutive minutes to work out can be split up throughout the day in 10-minute increments.

SEVEN // Multitask.

Daily chores can increase muscle mass, which boosts metabolism. Make small changes, like choosing to rake leaves rather than using a leaf blower. As muscles get stronger by working against resistance, the body will be able to burn calories more efficiently.

EIGHT // Don't sacrifice taste.

Good flavor is what makes food worth eating — but flavor doesn't have to mean high levels of saturated and trans fats. Add salt-free seasoning blends instead of salt to steamed vegetables for a real taste lift.

NINE // Make that annual check-up.

Schedule a doctor's appointment each year and get a complete blood screening. Visit GoRedForWomen.org and download "What to Know BEFORE Your Doctor Visit."