

About Women's Heart Foundation

(09/2002)

Women's Heart Foundation (WHF) is a 501(c) 3 public-supported charity incorporated June 11, 1992. It is the only heart organization devoted exclusively to improving the survival and quality of life for women with heart disease. Nonrestrictive bylaws allow WHF latitude to design, develop and implement wellness programs for women. This sets WHF apart from other heart organizations and has resulted in the Women's Heart Foundation becoming a frontrunner for women's cardiovascular health. Through advocacy, new programs and new initiatives, WHF has been able to address complex issues that surround women's heart health, survival and quality of life.

MILESTONES

- **1991-1994** – WHF convened three expert panels to serve as a steering committee for the organization. WHF implemented many of the ideas formulated by these experts. The panel was comprised of nurses, social workers, cardio-thoracic surgeons, cardiologists, primary care practitioners and patients.
- **1992** - In an effort to dispel the myth that heart disease is a man's disease, WHF designed educational materials to depict women as cardiac patients in a series of educational guides. First introduced as "Queen of Hearts", **Healthy Hearts Guides** provide the foundation for education about how heart disease affects women differently. To date, there are twelve guides.
- **1994** – WHF launched the first **Women's Heart Week** in the state of New Jersey. (*Formerly celebrated different days each year, in 2000, WHF locked in the Feb 1-7 date with designated focus days.*) The program with sample proclamation language is made available free on the web. Women's Heart Week is now proclaimed in 17 states.
- **1995** - WHF began an awareness campaign with letters to all 50 governors concerning the importance of recognizing that **heart disease symptoms present differently in women**. This successful campaign continues to this day.
- **1998** – WHF opened its website www.womensheartfoundation.org with specialty services not offered anywhere else. "Ask the Nurse" email service was offered for an entire year with forty questions a day being addressed. Advance Practice Nurse Joanne Samuel responded and the Q&A was posted on the web. WHF's "Dietary Supplements" page remains the most visited page. Another popular page is the Women's Heart Risk Checklist, an interactive quiz with pop-up message boxes to raise awareness about individual risk. The website receives over 700 hits a day with 110 pages of wellness information and offers free subscriptions to its e-newsletter with quarterly reports on research, one woman's story and recipes.
- **1999** – WHF introduced its **Medication Safety Program** in the state of New Jersey. Former governor Christie Whitman assisted with the launch of this program by completing several PSAs. These messages were then incorporated into a web page and other program materials. WHF's Medication Safety Program is available on Power Point. (*In 2001, WHF registered "Medication Safety Week" as April 1-7.*)
- **2000** – WHF held its first professional medical conference: **Women and Heart Disease...Getting to the Heart of It** that took place in Princeton, New Jersey. The successful conference addressed how sex affects the care and treatment of women with heart disease. The 147 practitioners who attended gave feedback that ranged from "Excellent" to "the best conference that I have ever attended."
- **2000** –WHF registered a Purple Ribbon to raise awareness about heart disease in women
- **2001** – WHF launched **Healthy Hearts for Caring Communities, Level I** with the motto "*wellness that works for women*". The program consists of a wellness station (kiosk) where a woman can self-monitor her blood pressure and find WHF's resource manual with consumer health guides, self-screening tools and caregiver records. It includes a Women's Wellness Calendar with colorful theme-based posters. Kiosks were set up at six sites throughout Mercer County, NJ including churches, community action centers and libraries. A primary goal of the kiosk is to gain control of high blood pressure.
- **2002** – WHF has positively influenced the cardiology community with measurable outcomes. A recent journal article reported that women's outcomes from angioplasty have improved, attributing this to consciousness-raising by women's groups. (JACC, Vol. 39, No.10, 2002). Another article questioned the prognostic value of stress echocardiography in women (JACC, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2002). Early intervention for accurately diagnosing women with CAD is at issue.
- **2002** - WHF introduced a new logo and website for its Women's Heart Week campaign to better coordinate activities and screenings locally, regionally and nationally. www.womensheartweek.org is scheduled for completion on or about Oct 31.
- **2002** –September 25, NIH/HLBI launched a new heart disease awareness program called THE HEART TRUTH. WHF joined the coalition upon special invitation by NIH. After twelve years of advocacy and raising awareness, WHF has prompted a national movement.

FUTURE

WHF will continue to advocate for gender separation of outcome data for open-heart bypass surgery so that researchers can begin to identify women's risk factors that are different and that weigh differently. WHF will continue to translate materials into Spanish. Nearly all of WHF's Healthy Hearts Guides are now available in Spanish.

Rising health care costs, cutbacks in provisions of care and increasing health insurance rates will have a profound impact on women as caregivers. To help counter some of the negative effects of reduced healthcare funding, WHF has designed **Healthy Hearts for Caring Communities, Level II**. This program is a new wellness model – unlike the current disease management model - and supports women as caregivers. It has the potential to reduce healthcare costs, lessen caregiver strain and save women's lives. In order to implement Level II of this program, WHF is seeking corporate sponsorships and starting a building fund to raise \$500,000 for the first **Women's Heart Wellness Center**. It will serve as a resource and training center for implementing WHF's new wellness model nationally and will offer programming for women locally.