

**American Heart Association
Second Annual Northern NJ
Go Red for Women Luncheon
February 11, 2011**

Acknowledgements

It is wonderful to be here for the 2nd Annual Northern NJ Go Red for Women Luncheon. I had the honor of chairing the inaugural luncheon last year and it was a very special event, so it is pleasure to come back. On behalf of Gov. Christie, I want to thank you the American Health Association for your efforts to focus public attention on women's heart health.

Just last week, First Lady Mary Pat Christie announced throughout the month of February Drumthwacket will be "dressed in red" to observe the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women campaign. The Governor and the First Lady understand that heart disease touches all of us and feel it is important to focus attention on this issue.

Events like today's are especially critical to raising awareness of the impact of heart disease. The theme of this year's luncheon is *Make It Your Mission to Fight Heart Disease and Stroke*. At this very event, there are more than 300 of us--300 that can make it our mission to raise awareness of women's risk for heart disease and stroke. If all of us in this room, tell 5 women we love about the importance of preventing heart disease--we can impact thousands of lives. So when we leave this event, let's take what we learned today with us and spread this message to our loved ones.

Heart Health

Women and heart disease is an issue of great personal and professional importance to me. As a physician, I've seen how cardiovascular disease can devastate people's health and lives. I can assure you heart disease does not discriminate. It affects people of all ages and races. It affects both men and women.

As Commissioner of Health and Senior Services, I confront this issue on a wider scale, too. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in women both nationally and in New Jersey.

In New Jersey, about 12,000 women die of heart disease and stroke annually. Women account for 52% of deaths due to diseases of the heart (9,747), and 60% of stroke deaths (2,117). In both the nation and the state, African American women are at greater risk of both developing cardiovascular diseases and dying from these diseases than are white women. Among Black women in New Jersey, the death rate from heart disease is 20% higher and stroke death rate is 40% higher than White women.

On top of the cost to the well-being of our communities, chronic diseases have a great impact economically. The costs of treating chronic diseases, like heart disease, hypertension and stroke, total \$7.5 billion in New Jersey. Chronic diseases resulted in \$31.5 billion in lost productivity and economic costs to our state. The best way to reduce

these costs and save lives is through education and prevention. A recent Trust for America's Health report concluded that investing \$10 per person per year in proven community-based programs that increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent smoking could save the country more than \$16 billion annually within 5 years

Today is just one step in reducing that impact. The goal is here today is to empower women to learn more about making lifestyle choices to reduce their risk. We want women and their daughters and their mothers to know that high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, smoking, obesity and lack of physical activity are all risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

We have come a long way since the 1950s and 1960s were most of the education aimed at women was telling them how to care of their husband's hearts. Now heart disease is recognized as disease that affects both men and women.

However, women are still at a disadvantage because many of the well-known symptoms of heart disease, such as chest pain, are not typical for women. In fact, nearly two-thirds of deaths occur among women with no history of chest pain. Instead, women may feel nausea, indigestion, and dizziness. They may have trouble catching their breath. Some may feel anxiety, much like a panic attack.

This presentation of symptoms could be part of the reason that the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality reports that there significant differences between men and women in survival following a heart attack. 42% of women who have heart attacks die within 1 year compared with 24% of men.

Thankfully, over the past 35 years, U.S. cardiovascular disease-related deaths have declined 50%. This marked reduction reflects advances in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of common cardiovascular conditions.

Despite vast improvements, we still have more work to do. Just last week, the CDC released their latest *Vital Signs* report, which reports that 2 out of 3 U.S. adults with high cholesterol and ½ of adults with high blood pressure are not being treated effectively. Among those whose blood pressure or cholesterol is not controlled, more than 80% have health insurance – showing that health care coverage for most people is not enough to control these leading killers.

These numbers tell us that too many Americans are at unnecessary risk for heart attack and stroke and that we must do better educating our residents about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and knowing your risk factors.

At the Department, we are committed to working with our health care partners to raise awareness of threats of heart disease. With a grant from the CDC, the Department is working to prevent heart disease and stroke, particularly among minority and multicultural populations. Since 2007, the Department has worked with the American

Heart Association and several community organizations on annual heart disease awareness events that focus on heart health awareness and heart healthy resources.

But there is more work to be done and that is why events like today's are so critical. Raising awareness can truly save lives. So please share what you've learned today with the women in your life and put them on a path to a heart healthy lifestyle.

Making a difference can be as simple as telling a handful of your closest friends about how heart disease affects women, telling people to visit the GoRedForWomen.Org or volunteering with your local American Heart Association office.

So thank you all for being here and for your tremendous support of women's health.

Thank you.

I am now honored to introduce Dr. Marjorie Gatlin who is this year's luncheon chair to the stage.

Dr. Gatlin...