

Association Celebrates Heart Health with 'Red Day'

By Stacy M. Brown,
Special to the NNPA
from The Washington
Informer

A website saved her life.

And Julia Allen, the national spokesperson for the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women campaign, said www.goredforwomen.org can save many more lives if everyone becomes aware of and makes good use of the website.

"If you say nothing else about me or about this cause, please just point everyone to the website," said Allen, who survived two heart attacks in one day in 2013.

"There's nothing like a heart attack that makes you change the way you eat and lose a little weight," said Allen, who is also helping to spread the word about the American Heart Association's National Wear Red Day, Friday, Feb. 6.

Heart disease is the leading killer of women and is more deadly than all forms of cancer, heart association



Shown here with her husband and three sons, Julia Allen is helping to spread the word about the American Heart Association's National Wear Red Day.

officials said. Allen said the statistics are even more deadly for African-Americans and other minorities.

African-American women are less likely than white women to be aware that heart disease is the leading cause of death.

Diabetes, smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, physical inactivity, obesity and a family history of heart disease are all greatly prevalent among African-Americans and are major risk factors for heart disease and stroke, heart association officials said.

What's more, African-American women have almost two times the risk of stroke as whites and are

more likely to die at an earlier age as compared with women of other ethnicities. The unsettling statistics include the fact that cardiovascular diseases kill nearly 50,000 African-American women annually, and, of African-American women ages 20 and older, 49 percent have heart diseases and only one in five African-American women believes she is personally at risk.

Further, just 52 percent of African-American women are aware of the signs and symptoms of a heart attack, and as little as 36 percent of African-American women know that heart disease is their greatest health risk.

In Allen's case, the mar-

ried mother of three boys, ages 14, 11 and 7, she said she had always put her family and friends' needs ahead of her own.

She worked a full-time job, helped each day to get her children off to school and participated in various activities while also preparing regular meals for the family.

Allen said she first felt a heart attack come on while at work.

Then, even as she felt pain in her chest, she went home to make an after-school snack for her boys before finally deciding to drive to the hospital.

"I didn't want to believe I could be having a heart attack," she said. "But I had

at least two that day. And, really, I looked on the Internet and came across the American Heart Association's website, and I was able to check my symptoms. And I found that I had six of the seven symptoms, and that's when I knew that I was definitely having a heart attack."

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