

# THE Skanner®

Challenging People to Shape  
a Better Future Now

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## THE Skanner.com

- Local News
- Pacific NW News
- World News
- Opinions
- Jobs, Bids
- Entertainment
- Community Calendar

### LOCAL NEWS BRIEFS LOCAL EVENTS

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# Opinion

## African American Heart Health Is Vital

Last month, February 2019, was not only Black History Month, it was also Heart Health Awareness Month per the American Heart Association. Heart disease is the number one killer of men and women in the United States.

Generally, heart disease is considered a man's disease, but more Black and White women die of heart disease than all cancers combined. About 610,000 men and women die of heart disease each year and it accounts for 1 in 4 deaths in both genders. Coronary Heart Disease is the most common type and accounts for over half of these deaths. Coronary heart disease increases the risk for heart attacks and over 700,000 Americans have heart attacks each year.

Like other serious health issues, African Americans have disproportionately high rates of heart disease. Every month for 49 million African Americans should be heart health awareness month.

The three largest risk factors that lead to fatal heart disease are high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking. Diabetes, Obesity, poor diet, physical inactivity, and excess drinking are other risk factors. There are other lifestyle concerns that can



Dr. Anisa Shomo

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also lead to high blood pressure and obesity such as poor sleep and high stress levels.

Heart disease signs and symptoms are chest pain and discomfort, nausea, lightheadedness, shortness of breath, sweating, upper body pain or discomfort (jaw, arms, neck, upper back, upper

“Over 700,000 Americans have heart attacks each year

stomach). If you or a loved one are experiencing these symptoms you should call 9-1-1 immediately.

Now that I have your attention at least for a moment, there are specific ways to improve your heart health. Know your heart-related numbers. Get your primary care doctor at least once per year to check your blood pressure, heart rate, BMI (body

mass index), and cholesterol.

High blood pressure or hypertension is called the “Silent Killer” because many people have no symptoms of their blood pressure being high. Your doctor will also screen you for depression and other conditions depending on your age and risk factors.

Check your weight at home often (daily, weekly, monthly) to make sure that you are not gaining weight. Many people gain 5 pounds per year without awareness and that adds up over the years. The goal is a blood pressure under 130/80 and a heart rate between 60 and 80.

Smoking cigarettes is not good for your health and in particular smoking is not good for a healthy heart. If you smoke, you should consider the health benefits of “stop smoking.”

Consistent exercise is also important to keep your heart healthy. Be Active: at least 30 minutes five days per week. Think about how you can move naturally in your home. Can you walk more in your home? Can you routinely bike or lift weights or stretch? Make a plan to walk more by setting goals for how much you want to walk, how often, and how you will track your progress (pedometer, stop-

watch, timer, calendar, etc).

Eat a “Heart Healthy Diet.” Of course there will always be a range of strategies and objectives to help maintain having a healthy heart. Diet is another user-friendly item. In other words, you can control your personal daily diet. Avoiding becoming overweight and obesity are both related to diet. Studies have concluded that a “Mediterranean Diet” has consistently been shown to be the preferred diet for heart health. It is not actually a diet but the way that people in Mediterranean cultures eat for their whole lives. It consists of small amounts of meat, fish, and dairy but is mostly plant-based.

Weight is directly related to diet and physical exercise. Maintaining a healthy weight is a factor in sustaining a healthy heart. This is a somewhat controversial because as recent studies have shown that weight is not as important to heart health as diet and exercise. That is to say that whether your weight is low or high, you should still be working to have a healthy diet and stay active. If you do desire to weight loss, talk with your doctor about long-term plan.

Read the rest of this commentary at [TheSkanner.com](http://TheSkanner.com)

## The Black Women Jailed for ‘Stealing’ an Education

Actress Lori Loughlin was taken into custody by the FBI March 13 in Los Angeles after she, fellow movie star Felicity Huffman and 48 others were charged in a \$25 million college admissions scam that ABC News said has prompted repercussions from Hollywood to the boardrooms of major corporations.

A former cast member on the ABC sitcom “Full House,” Loughlin and Oscar-nominated actress Huffman, are among 33 parents charged with conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud in the nationwide scam to get their children into elite colleges, including Yale, Stanford, Georgetown and the University of Southern California.

Social media is abuzz over this case, and many are wondering whether anyone will spend time in jail for their crimes.

For some, it's another example of the difference between when the White “elite” are charged with crimes compared to poor people of color. “Kelley Williams-Bolar and Tanya McDowell enrolled their children into Public School Districts in which they did not reside,” one Twitter user with the handle @dlnodots wrote.



Stacy M. Brown

NNPA Columnist

“They were both jailed for these crimes. Should Felicity Huffman and Lori Loughlin be held to that same standard?” the user wrote.

“[McDowell] got 12 years for sending her six-year-old son to Norwalk, Connecticut’s Brookside Elementary School

Others on social media concurred with @dlnodots.

In 2011, Williams-Bolar, a Black woman, was sentenced to 10 days in county jail, three years of probation and \$30,000 in restitution for lying about her residency to get her daughters into a better school district in Ohio.

For McDowell, the punish-

ment was worse.

“[McDowell] got 12 years for sending her six-year-old son to Norwalk, Connecticut’s Brookside Elementary School while she ‘lived’ in Bridgeport, even though she was homeless,” said Bishop Talbert Swan, an activist and pastor.

“She was convicted of 1st degree larceny for ‘stealing’ an education,” Swan said.

When McDowell was sentenced in 2012, she vowed to continue to fight for a better education and life for her young son.

Authorities said that her charges were compounded by the fact that she twice sold drugs to an undercover police officer. The convoluted case left some scratching their heads, while others who had previously supported McDowell began to step away when the drug charges surfaced.

Some observers suspected that because of the “stealing” education case, the homeless woman was targeted and set up by authorities, including a relentless cold-hearted prosecutor.

“Who would have thought that wanting a good education for my son would put me in this predicament,” McDowell, 34, said at her sentencing where she received 12 years

in prison with seven years suspended.

“I have no regrets seeking a better education for him, I do regret my participation in this drug case,” she said.

Norm Pattis, a trial lawyer who said he’s fighting for freedom “one client at a time,” recently wrote a sobering blog about the McDowell case.

Pattis, who practices law in Connecticut, said the system owes McDowell.

“I hope Tanya McDowell will forgive us, someday, for our hypocrisy and cruelty. I hope her son will as well. But first she will have to serve her prison term. Her son will have to learn to get along without her,” Pattis said.

Experienced criminal defense lawyers know the charges faced by McDowell often go hand-in-hand with life circumstances: “An addict has to steal, often, to support their habit,” Pattis said.

However, McDowell was no ordinary drug user, he said. “She did not steal to support her habit. She stole an education from the City of Norwalk. Yeah, that’s right. We now send people to prison for theft of an education,” Pattis said.

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