

Advancing Cardiovascular Health in Delaware Through Community Partnerships

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Cardiovascular disease remains a pressing health concern in Delaware. For more than a century, the American Heart Association has been working to ensure equitable health in all communities and longer, healthier lives for all. In collaboration with local organizations and community members, the Association supports prevention, early detection, and emergency response through programs that prioritize access, practical skills, and local engagement. Together, these initiatives reflect a community-centered approach designed to meet people where they are and reduce barriers to heart health.

Practical Nutrition Education That Meets People Where They Are

Behavioral risk factors are central to cardiovascular health, yet the gap between knowing what to do and being able to do it can be wide. Time constraints, cost, and limited access to hands-on education often make healthy choices feel out of reach. To help bridge this gap, the American Heart Association implemented Healthy for Good workshops in Dover and Wilmington, Delaware. Over four weeks, participants practiced cooking techniques, meal planning, and smart shopping strategies with an emphasis on affordability and accessibility.

The workshops created an interactive setting where participants prepared meals, asked questions, and discussed real-life challenges. This practical model supports confidence, a key ingredient in sustained behavior change, and fostered a sense of community. Participants encouraged one another and continued to stay connected outside of sessions. At the conclusion, individuals received tools and resources to keep applying what they learned at home.

Embedding Blood Pressure Screening in Trusted Community Spaces

While prevention is essential, early detection remains a critical line of defense. Hypertension, or high blood pressure, often has no symptoms; therefore, patients benefit from routine monitoring. To expand access to screening, the American Heart Association introduced blood pressure kiosks at the Bear-Glasgow YMCA and other public places across the state. Located in trusted community settings, the kiosks offer a free and convenient way for individuals to check their blood pressure and better understand their risk for heart attack and stroke.

The kiosks provide readings within minutes and guide users on appropriate next steps when results fall outside a healthy range. By reducing barriers related to cost, transportation and time, community-based screening tools help more people identify potential concerns early and integrate preventive care into daily life.

Strengthening the Chain of Survival Through Community CPR Training

Even with prevention and early detection, cardiac emergencies can occur. In these moments, immediate bystander action is often critical. To strengthen community readiness, the American Heart Association distributed CPR and First Aid in Youth Sports Training Kits to organizations serving young people and families across New Castle County.

The kits were provided to BPG Sports Group, My Sister's Keeper, the Boys and Girls Club of New Castle, and the Teen Warehouse, organizations that regularly bring together large numbers of youth, staff, volunteers, and families. Delivering training through these trusted community partners creates opportunities to build lifesaving skills among people who are often present when emergencies occur.

The facilitator-led training enables participants to learn hands-only CPR, automated external defibrillator (AED) use and basic first aid in less than one hour. By equipping coaches, staff, parents and athletes with these skills, the initiative extends the chain of survival beyond clinical settings and fosters a culture of preparedness in everyday community spaces.

Conclusion

Cardiovascular health is shaped by daily behaviors, access to preventive care and the ability to respond effectively in an emergency. In Delaware, the American Heart Association's community-based efforts, including practical nutrition education, accessible blood pressure screening and widespread CPR training, work together to support healthier lives. As public health initiatives continue to evolve, approaches that emphasize accessibility, engagement and community partnership will remain essential.

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