

*Washington Hospital Group Meets Monthly for Education and Support*

Randy Catalano and his wife Diane are passionate about heart health. Both have undergone triple bypass surgeries and know how important it is to take good care of your heart. Now they dedicate themselves to helping other people with heart disease.

“Having major heart surgery is a life-changing event,” Randy said. “We want to educate people so they can avoid serious heart problems and support those who have had heart surgery.”

February is American Heart Health Month, a good time to focus on reducing your risk for heart disease, the leading cause of death for both men and women in the U.S. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 715,000 people have a heart attack each year and an estimated 600,000 people die from heart disease.

Diane had her triple bypass surgery in 2009 and a year later it almost to the day Randy had his. It was a scary and difficult time for the Catalanos, but they are grateful for the care they received at Washington Hospital and now they want to give back.

Randy is president of the local chapter of Mended Hearts, a national nonprofit organization that provides support and education to heart disease patients and their loved ones. Diane is one of two certified Mended Hearts visitors at Washington Hospital.

“I was really scared when I had my surgery, so I know what other heart disease patients are going through,” Diane said. “It’s a tough time for both the family and patient.”

Mended Hearts visitors are specially trained to talk with heart disease patients who are undergoing heart surgery or receiving angioplasty, as well as their families, friends, and caregivers. Diane volunteers three days a week at Washington Hospital, visiting patients before and after their procedures.

While the accredited visiting program is an important aspect of Mended Hearts, it also serves as a support group for people with heart disease and their caregivers. Mended Hearts usually meets at 5 p.m. on the second

Tuesday of the month. Meetings are held at the Conrad E. Anderson, M.D. Auditorium at 2500 Mowry Avenue

(Washington West) in Fremont.

Heart to Heart

The Mended Hearts support group gives people the opportunity to talk about their issues and concerns with others who understand what they are dealing with, as well as get their questions answered. Meetings include an educational component and often a guest speaker will discuss some aspect of heart disease such as medical advances, treatment options, and tips for healthy living.

The next meeting is February 11 and will include a presentation by Dr. Thirupathi Reddy, a local cardiologist who will talk about electrophysiology and the diagnosis and treatment of cardiac arrhythmia. The Mended Hearts annual potluck dinner will also be held during the February meeting.

The March meeting is scheduled for March 18, which is actually the third Tuesday of the month. Dr. Ash Jain, also a cardiologist, will talk about the clinical trial he is conducting on the world's first "bioresorbable" stents. The new implants open the clogged artery and restore blood flow to the heart in the same way metallic stents do, but the new implant dissolves into the blood vessel over a period of several months, allowing the vessel to resume a more natural function and movement because it is free of a permanent metallic implant.

“It’s an exciting new development that I think a lot of heart disease patients will want to hear about,” Randy said. “We try to bring in speakers like Dr. Reddy and Dr. Jain who can provide members with critical information about the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease.”

In addition to the meetings, members receive a monthly newsletter that Randy writes and produces. It features information about Mended Hearts, upcoming speakers, and educational topics.

Members also receive a subscription to Heartbeat Magazine, published quarterly by the national organization. The local Mended Hearts chapter has nearly 75 members and is looking to increase its membership and the number of certified visitors.

“Visiting patients and their families is very rewarding,” Diane said. “Major heart surgery can be traumatic and it feels good to be able to provide some comfort and support. When they see me they see someone who has made it through to the other side. There is life after heart surgery.”

Randy added: “I really encourage anyone who is interested in learning more about heart disease and heart healthy living, or looking for some support, to get involved with Mended Hearts. It’s a great group of people.”

#### Fast Treatment for Serious Heart Attacks

As a designated cardiac receiving center for Alameda County, Washington Hospital is committed to providing the fastest, most effective heart attack treatment possible.

- Washington Hospital was an early adopter of the standard to get heart attack patients into the Cardiac Catheterization Lab for angioplasty to restore blood flow to the heart within 90 minutes or less,

which means faster care and better outcomes for the patient. Today, our recommended target is 60 minutes and we are working hard to meet the goal consistently.

- Washington Hospital collaborates with paramedics in the field who can perform an electrocardiogram and transmit the results to the Hospital and treating cardiologist. The goal is to enable the doctor to make a diagnosis and prescribe immediate treatment, even before the patient is transported to the hospital.
- Washington Hospital's Cardiac Catheterization Lab is at the leading edge of interventional treatment for serious heart attacks.
- Washington Hospital is one of only a handful of Bay Area hospitals that has a full service cardiac rehabilitation program. Cardiac rehabilitation begins in the hospital with pre-surgical education for patients and families so that they know what to anticipate. During the hospital stay, patients receive education, psychological support and reassurance as they prepare to go home. Patients are then encouraged to participate in the out-patient cardiac rehabilitation program where patients exercise under the observation of our clinical team.

From leading edge diagnostic equipment and interventional services, to the latest in surgical procedures and cardiac rehabilitation, Washington Hospital's Heart Program provides patients with a full continuum of high quality care. Washington Township Health Care District has a clear mission to reinvest in and improve upon all patient care services; as such our cardiac service offers the latest in technology, attracts top physicians and provides streamlined access for patients.

Learn More

To learn about the Heart Program at Washington Hospital, visit [www.whhs.com/heart](http://www.whhs.com/heart).

If you are interested in joining the local chapter of Mended Hearts, or plan to attend the next meeting, please call (510) 494-7022. For information about the national Mended Hearts, visit [www.mendedhearts.org](http://www.mendedhearts.org).