

AoA Older Americans Month 2008 Program Champion



Project: “**Healthy Hearts: Women’s Cardiovascular Health Awareness Forum**”

Organization: Detroit Area Agency on Aging

Description:

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), heart disease continues to be the #1 killer of women in America. Older women, in particular African American women, are disproportionately affected. The AHA developed a campaign known as “Go Red” to educate and inform women regarding heart disease. On a local level, the Detroit Area Agency on Aging (DAAA) participated with the “Wear Red for Women” campaign. Our exciting and innovative event entitled, *Healthy Hearts: Cardiovascular Health Awareness Forum* was held on February 15, 2008 in the Grand Court of Eastland Center. It consisted of an all-red fashion show with mature models, speakers, health screenings and a heart-healthy luncheon.

The goals of the project were to:

- To educate the community about the effects of heart disease on women.
- To recruit seniors as ambassadors to extend the message of lifestyle and change heart health.
- To highlight the stories of the “Mature Models” who had either been impacted by heart disease and/or lifestyle changes.

Objectives:

- Provide an opportunity for the models to share either the effects of heart disease or the success of their lifestyle changes.
- Provide glucose screenings, blood pressure screenings, BMI and body fat screenings.
- Share resources and information.
- Present and discuss heart healthy tips from a local Cardiologist

The *Healthy Hearts: Cardiovascular Health Awareness Forum* exemplified the importance of making behavioral changes in lifestyles that can reduce risk of disease, disability and injury. The forum provided the opportunity to educate the community on heart disease and how it affects women. In addition to the forum, the luncheon incorporated food choices that were simple, yet very tasty and heart-healthy. The all-red fashion show featured mature models ranging in age from 40 to 91 years. The models were able to share their “Heart Story” about their diagnosis or their lifestyle change for a healthy heart.

Partnerships: The sponsors of the event were Detroit Area Agency on Aging (DAAA), Detroit Wayne County Long Term Care Connection, St. John Health and Eastland Center. The partners were American Heart Association, Arthritis Foundation Michigan Chapter, Henry Ford Health System and the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan.

Health screenings were provided as well as information on controlling blood pressure, preventing heart disease and stroke, as well as additional health education materials. The eldest 91 year old model stated that she had to miss her aerobics class in order to model for the fashion show! Many attendees expressed that this event gave them a different perspective of aging – one that is expressive, stylish and exciting - and motivated them to begin making their own lifestyle changes. The estimated number of participants was 170.

This was the first event of its kind in Detroit and the agency plans to make this an annual event. The event was an effective way to recruit individuals to participate in other health programs sponsored by the DAAA. The contact information for each of the attendees was added to a database of individuals to whom we send information about other health events and programs like the Personal Action Toward Health (PATH), a chronic disease self-management program. Individuals were given the opportunity to register on-site for programs.

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