

Rosetta volunteers with the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women, both locally and nationally.

# What HEART DISEASE SURVIVORS Want You to Know

These four women are proof that heart disease can strike anytime, anywhere. Now they're spreading the word so others can stay healthy.

BY LESLIE GOLDMAN

“Start  
managing  
your stress.  
Now.”

ROSETTA CARRINGTON LUE  
47, Philadelphia



**A**s chief customer service officer for the city of Philadelphia, my job can be summed up in one word: challenging. I love the responsibility, but it often means little time to relax.

In January 2012, I began experiencing a bizarre series of symptoms: swollen hands, a limp on my right side and unexplained fatigue. Doctors threw multiple diagnoses at me, including lupus, anemia, a torn Achilles heel. (I even wore a boot for two weeks!) I tried to just power on, but by March, it was too painful to even walk. I called 911, and after two days of tests, I was diagnosed with

bacterial endocarditis, an infection of the lining of the heart. (I likely contracted it during dental surgery in January.) Caught early, it's cured with penicillin, but mine had spread so aggressively that I needed emergency surgery to replace both heart valves.

After recovery, I had to change my habits. I began jogging 30 minutes a day on my treadmill and slashed my salt intake, but I also

decided to put my heart health first by delegating more at work.

Since stress is a major risk factor for heart disease, I had to learn to start saying no to additional requests or projects—both at work and in my personal life. Whenever I start to feel overwhelmed, I remind myself that no task is more important than my life. This helps me to calm down and refocus on my wellness.

“Take your family history seriously.”

YASKARY REYES, 53, Weston, FL

When I was 15, I lost my mom to a massive heart attack. She was only 38 years old. I remember asking her why she was vomiting and she said, “Indigestion.” After Mama passed away, I went to live with my aunt; while I was there she had a heart attack too, at just 33.

I stayed active throughout my 20s, running a few miles per day, and naively figured that would protect me. After getting married in 1985, though, I wasn’t watching what I ate and became more sedentary. In October 2009, I started to notice a mild pressure

in my left shoulder, and I thought about the scary experiences with my mom and my aunt. I knew that I couldn’t brush off any warning signs and immediately called my doctor. He ordered tests that uncovered five arterial blockages. At age 49, I underwent emergency quintuple bypass surgery.

At the time, my cholesterol was dangerously high, so I started medication and revamped my eating habits. I cut my portions in half and started eating more salad. I know how lucky I am to be alive—and I am committed to a smart lifestyle so I can avoid my family’s fate.

As a *Heart Truth* ambassador, Yaskary shares her story with other women across the U.S.



Andrea speaks at local American Heart Association events.

“There’s no such thing as ‘too young’ for a heart attack.”

ANDREA WOIE  
34, Richmond, VA

My husband, Ian, and I were on vacation in August 2012 when a dull pain spread across my chest and I became short of breath. After resting for 10 minutes, I felt fine and figured it was just a fluke. The pain came back twice that night, so I called my doctor when we got home. She sent me for an EKG, chest X-ray and CT scan, but everything came back normal.

A few days later, the pain returned, this time in my back, radiating through my shoulder blades. It got worse and I was in the emergency room by Saturday night. When my doctor read my new EKG results, he looked perplexed as he said, “You had a heart attack.” I was a 32-year-old nonsmoker with no risk factors. Turns out, I had a 100% blockage in the artery known as “the widowmaker,” due to a chunk of plaque that had lodged there. A stent was inserted to open it up.

Today, I see my cardiologist every six months and I exercise three times a week. It sounds crazy, but having a heart attack at 32 was a blessing. Ian and I are focused on adopting healthy habits *now* so we can live a long life together.



## “Don't brush off the telltale signs.”

LYNNE WADE, 66, Boise, ID

On July 4, 2011, I had left a friend's home around 11 P.M. when, out of nowhere, I became disoriented and began to drip with sweat. Chalking it up to the heat of summer, I continued toward my car to turn on the air conditioning, but collapsed instead.

A stranger heard my cries for help and called 911. Tests revealed a heart attack and three weeks later, I had open-heart surgery. If I'm being completely honest with myself, the warning signals like abnormal fatigue and shortness of breath

were there, but I assumed they were just natural parts of aging.

After the incident, I started working with a nutritionist and keeping a food journal, which helped me make changes like adding heart-healthy fish to my dinners twice a week and reading labels to pay close attention to sodium. I also started doing resistance training twice a week. I've lost 20 pounds post-surgery and my blood pressure is in a healthy range. Whenever I need some motivation, I just look at the 6-inch scar on my chest.



Lynne is a *WomenHeart* Champion and leads a local support group.