



American Heart Association.



THIS FEBRUARY, LET'S
GO RED
FOR EACH OTHER.



Rajini Poth, PhD
Stroke Survivor

**National Wear
Red Day**

Friday, February 7, 2025

WearRedDay.Org

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Columbus unites against women’s No. 1 killer

American Heart Association’s annual Go Red for Women Luncheon raises awareness and critical funds for women’s cardiovascular health

On Thursday, Feb. 20, more than 600 guests will be dressed in red and united against the No. 1 killer of women at the 2025 Columbus Go Red for Women Luncheon. The Luncheon honors survivors, celebrates advancements in heart health and raises funds to continue to better identify, diagnose, treat and prevent cardiovascular disease (CVD) in women, which currently claims the lives of 1 in 3 women each year.

CVD remains a woman’s greatest health threat, yet women remain underdiagnosed and undertreated. Women also experience unique life stages, such as pregnancy and menopause, that increase their risk of heart disease and stroke. The American Heart Association’s Go Red for Women movement is committed to ensuring women are no longer disproportionately affected by CVD. The annual Columbus Go Red for Women Luncheon brings the community together to learn about women’s heart health and help fund critical, lifesaving research to address the unique risk factors and needs of women.

“Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death in women, and events like this year’s Go Red

for Women Luncheon are crucial for raising awareness and providing education to help all women better understand their risks for heart disease and stroke and how to reduce it,” said Marchelle Moore, Go Red for Women chair and SVP, external affairs, chief diversity officer & president, Encova Foundation of Ohio at Encova Insurance. “Together, we can ensure every woman is supported and that no one has to go it alone.”

The Luncheon, held at the Hilton Columbus Downtown in the Kojo Kamau Junior Ballroom, will open at 10:30 a.m. with interactive exhibits including a VIP reception, healthy snacks, Hands-Only CPR education and more, with the Luncheon program following promptly at noon. Featured speakers include:

- Keynote Speaker: Priya Bathija, Founder & CEO, Nyoo Health
- 2025 Columbus Go Red for Women Chair: Marchelle Moore

The event will also highlight the inspiring stories of:

- Rajini Poth, PhD, stroke survivor
- Sarah Sue Morbitzer, congenital heart disease survivor
- Noni Banks, heart survivor

Since 2004, the Go Red for Women movement has raised awareness and addressed clinical care gaps of CVD for women. As the movement celebrates more than 20 years of making an impact, the Association, a global force for healthier lives for all for more than 100 years, calls on all women to take charge of their health and make a lasting impact on the health and well-being of their community.

“Through Go Red for Women, we’re funding research to advance innovative solutions specific to women’s unique health experiences and needs,” said Nancy Tobbe, executive director for the American Heart Association, Central Ohio. “Go Red for Women is here for women’s health and well-being at every age, stage and season of their lives, and by coming together and supporting the women in our community, we can make a lasting impact.”

As women grow and change, so does their risk for cardiovascular disease. CVD is the leading cause of death in women, claiming more lives than all cancers combined. Nearly 45% of women over age 20 are living with some form of CVD. It’s also the leading cause of maternal death in the U.S., and pregnancy-related deaths

are on the rise. Yet, according to an American Heart Association special report, younger generations of women, Gen Z and Millennials, are less likely to be aware of their greatest health threat, including knowing the warning signs of heart attacks and strokes. That’s why it’s important for all women to advocate for their heart health and encourage others to do the same.

Go Red for Women is nationally sponsored by CVS Health and locally sponsored by The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, Big Lots Foundation, Cardinal Health, Victoria’s Secret & Co., Encova Insurance and local media sponsors ABC 6 and Fox 28, The Columbus Dispatch, La Mega Media and Sunny 95. Visit www.heart.org/columbusgored for more information about Go Red for Women in Columbus.

¹ Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics—2023 Update: A Report From the American Heart Association | Circulation (ahajournals.org)
² Centers for Disease Control Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System Table: Causes of Pregnancy-Related Deaths
³ <https://newsroom.heart.org/news/heart-disease-awareness-decline-spotlights-urgency-to-reach-younger-women-and-women-of-color>



American Heart Association.



Go Red
for women.

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Rajini Poth, PhD
Stroke Survivor

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Meet the 2025 Go Red for Women Chair

One local leader's passion to fight the No. 1 killer of women



Marchelle Moore
SVP, External Affairs, Chief Diversity Officer
& President, Encova Foundation of Ohio at
Encova Insurance

Q: What's your why, what is your personal connection to heart disease or stroke?

A: My mother is my why. She suffered a stroke in 2017 and is now living with vascular dementia. Vascular dementia is a very cruel disease. It slowly robs people of their memory and ability to reason. My mother now has significant cognitive impairment, including substantial memory loss; yet she still remembers me. I have tried to prepare myself for the day she doesn't know who I am. I am not sure I can fully prepare for that day, but what I do know is if that day ever comes, I will know who she is and what she means to me – and that is enough. I am grateful for every day I have with her.

Q: What are you most looking forward to during your chair year?

A: Engaging with new people. Sharing vitally important information. Raising necessary dollars to support research.

Q: How would you like to see the community get involved and support the Go Red for Women movement?

A: By making healthy lifestyle choices. I recently learned that my cholesterol is elevated and have made several lifestyle changes. Candidly, my fear is that I won't be consistent with the positive changes that I've made, but I try not to look too far in advance and take one day at a time. So far, so good!



Q: What are your favorite parts about Go Red for Women?

A: My favorite part is working alongside the Go Red for Women Executive Leadership Team strategizing on ways to support the mission of the American Heart Association. Being around other smart, passionate, generous women is invigorating!

Q: What does Go Red for Women's focus on improving women's health mean to you?

A: It means that more women will understand the risks of heart disease and stroke and actions they can take to improve their cardiovascular health.

Q: What would you like to say to companies and individuals who join you in making a significant investment of time and resources into the American Heart Association and Go Red for Women?

A: "Thank you" – which doesn't even begin to capture the magnitude of gratefulness that I feel.

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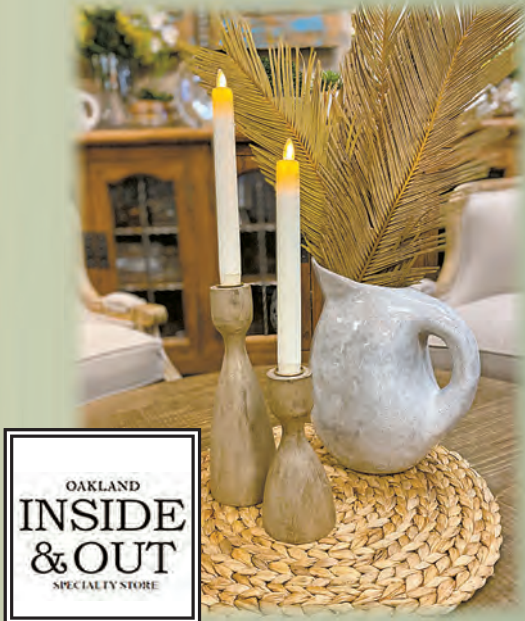
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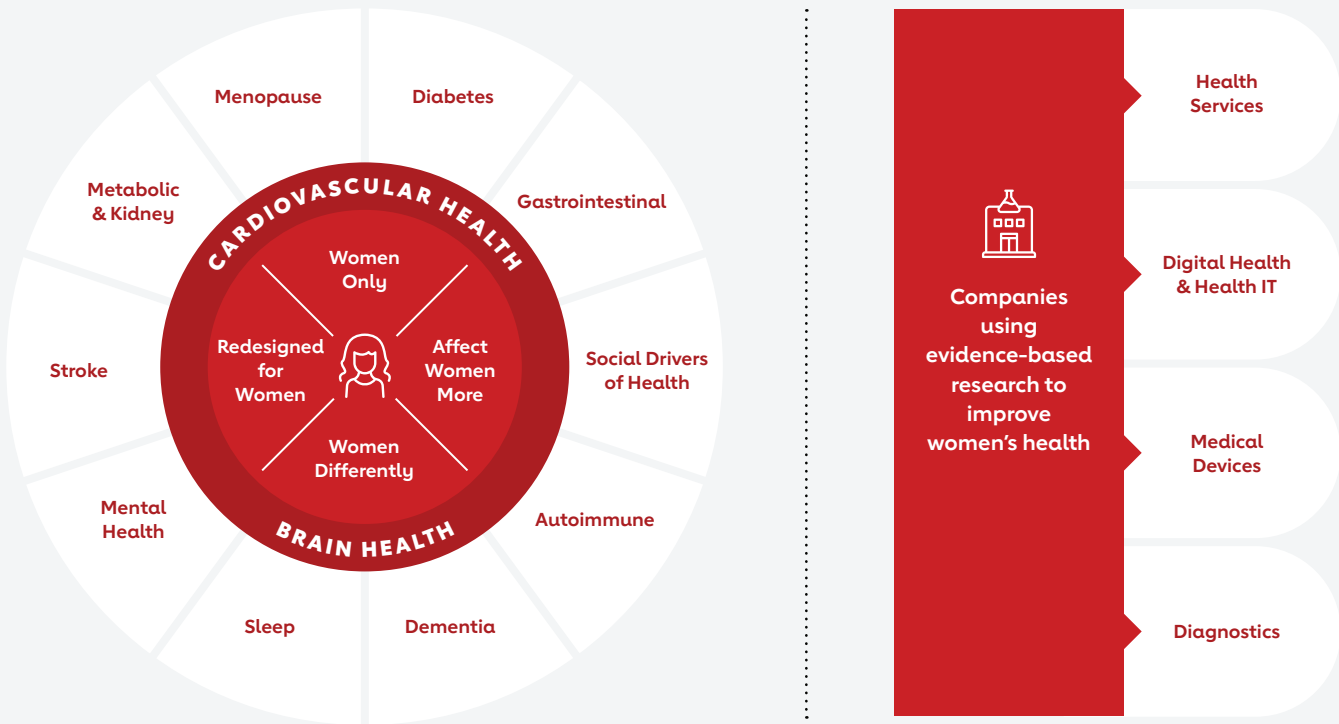
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Accelerating Science-to-Action for Women’s Health

FACT: Cardiovascular disease is the **No. 1** killer of women. **FACT:** Women account for **66%** of people living with Alzheimer’s disease in the U.S. **FACT:** Women are **2x** as likely as men to be diagnosed with depression; people with depression have a **40%** higher risk of developing cardiovascular and metabolic diseases. **FACT:** **Less than 2%** of health care venture funding went to women’s health in 2023 and, of that, the majority went solely to reproductive health, leaving heart, brain and related conditions unaddressed. **FACT:** **Without funding to translate science and research into real products and services, women’s health will continue to lag.**

GO RED FUND INVESTMENT FOCUS



Women are **7x** more likely than men to have a heart condition misdiagnosed.

The women’s health gap equates to **75 million** years of life lost annually due to poor health or early death.

Nearly **45%** of women over age 20 are living with some form of cardiovascular disease.

Women account for **80%** of people living with autoimmune diseases that can harm both the heart and brain.

Just over **35%** of women ages 40–64 say their health care provider spoke to them about what to expect in menopause.

THE BIG PAYOFF

Every \$1 invested in women’s health generates about \$3 in economic growth. Closing the women’s health gap will both improve lives and open the potential for a \$1 trillion uplift to the global economy by 2040.

Cardiovascular disease alone makes up more than a third of the sex and gender health gap in the United States. Acting today will, by 2040, result in:

↑ **1.6 million** healthier life years for women

↑ **\$28 billion** boost to the U.S. economy, annually

↑ **\$80 billion+** uplift globally

⊕ Women’s health is a big market opportunity. By supporting companies that are addressing the high unmet need, the Go Red Fund expands the movement to turn opportunity into real impact.

CLOSING THE WOMEN’S HEART HEALTH GAP REQUIRES ACTION ON 5 FRONTS:

- 1. ADVANCE SEX-SPECIFIC RESEARCH**

Research can be substantially improved by shifting from a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to prioritizing sex-specific differences.
- 2. IMPROVE ROUTINE HEALTH DATA COLLECTION & TREATMENT ALGORITHMS**

Effective guidelines rely on a foundation of comprehensive data with representation of women across all age groups, races and ethnicities and health conditions. Collecting women-specific data should become routine, in a standardized, easily-digestible format.
- 3. EQUIP HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS ACROSS THE CARE CONTINUUM**

Healthcare providers across the spectrum should view women's cardiovascular health as a shared responsibility.
- 4. RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND TAILOR PREVENTION STRATEGIES ACROSS ALL LIFE-STAGES**

Public education campaigns continue to play a valuable role and there is a need to develop culturally sensitive, accessible materials that raise awareness about risk factors, prevention strategies and resources tailored to those at risk.
- 5. INVEST IN BUSINESSES AND INITIATIVES THAT FURTHER WOMEN'S HEART HEALTH**

Investing in businesses and initiatives that further women's heart health could have benefits for patients, society and investors. By addressing the unmet needs in women's heart health, businesses can make a significant impact on the lives of women and potentially tap into a large, underserved market.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE IN WOMEN AT [GOREDFORWOMEN.ORG](https://www.goredforwomen.org).

By prioritizing research, education, and accessible healthcare, a future is possible where millions of women not only live longer, healthier lives, but also contribute their full potential to a thriving global society.



This report was developed in collaboration between the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women movement and the McKinsey Health Institute.

New Go Red for Women Venture Fund® invests in health companies that target cardiovascular, metabolic and neurologic solutions across a woman’s lifespan

“We can’t close the gender gap in cardiovascular care until we start investing in research and solutions focused on women. Through the Go Red for Women Venture Fund, we can turn science into treatments that will change and save women’s lives.” – Sally Ross Soter



Sarah (Sally) Ross Soter, a long-time American Heart Association volunteer and patron, and her husband, Bill, help fund the Sarah Ross Soter Center for Women’s Cardiovascular Research at NYU Grossman School of Medicine. This Center is part of the Association’s Go Red for Women Strategically Focused Research Network.



Turning the tide for women’s health
Cardiovascular disease continues to be the leading cause of death for women, and gaps in care and access persist between women and men. According to a recent report published by the American Heart Association and McKinsey Health Institute, one of the main contributors to this gap

is a limited understanding of the biological differences between women and men, specifically surrounding how CVD manifests itself in puberty, pregnancy and menopause. Similarly, cardiovascular research and clinical studies often underrepresent women, resulting in subpar treatment outcomes. Women’s health has long been viewed by investors as

a niche market, representing just 2% of the more than \$41.2 billion in healthcare venture funding in 2023. A lack of scientific knowledge, limited gender-specific medical training and little investment in specific research and venture funding further exacerbate this disparity. To help address the pervasive lack of investment in women’s health, the American Heart Association launched the Go Red for Women Venture Fund (Go Red Fund) to accelerate discovery. The \$75 million women’s health venture fund is seeded with \$40 million in direct funding from the Association and is supported by a \$15 million cornerstone gift from Sally Ross Soter, who has deep ties and connections to the Columbus community.

Investing for Impact at Every Age, Stage and Season of Life
Breakthrough science and research can take decades to translate into commercially available, broadly adopted standards of care — if it ever does. Even when companies

bring new services to market, they often fail to account for the very real differences between men and women’s clinical needs. This results in inadequate treatment and poor outcomes for women. The Go Red Fund is working to change today’s reality by investing across a spectrum of cardiovascular health, brain health and related conditions in alignment with the Association’s strategic focus on improving women’s health at every age, stage and season of life. The Go Red Fund builds on the American Heart Association’s Go Red for Women movement and the Association’s 100 years of knowledge and expertise at the intersection of science, medicine and health care delivery. The Association and its army of clinicians and researchers are passionate about advancing gender equity in research and improving health care delivery for all.

Translating Science and Research to Action
The Go Red Fund invests in companies that are translating evidence-based science

and clinical expertise into products and services that are specifically intended to drive better health access and outcomes for women. By combining science with the financial resources required to spark real-world change, the Go Red Fund supports companies that advance women’s health. And, with a \$75 million capital target, it will be one of the world’s largest venture funds focused specifically on making an impact for women.

About American Heart Association Ventures®
American Heart Association Ventures® is a platform that leads and coordinates the venture capital programs of the American Heart Association. The vision of American Heart Association Ventures builds upon the overall Association mission by funding programs that ensure the translation of high quality, evidence-based science, research and clinical know-how into actionable, meaningful, equitable and sustainable positive impact for patients and the health care system. To learn more visit www.heart.org/ventures.

MORE CARE FOR ALL OF YOU

February is American Heart Month, and we’re celebrating by helping patients better understand heart health.

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ONCE PARALYZED, RAJINI POTTH OVERCAME HER STROKE AND IS SHARING HER STORY TO EMPOWER WOMEN

At 51, Rajini Potth was juggling a busy family and career. She also was experiencing headaches but delayed seeking treatment. Then while driving to work, she suddenly couldn't move the right side of her body and waited hours alone in a parking lot not cognizant she needed help. She had no idea she was having a stroke. Now, she uses her experience to empower other women.

Rajini Potth tried to convince herself that the headaches and fatigue she had experienced for weeks were caused by allergies. She kept delaying making a doctor's appointment because she was too busy juggling family and her career at a medical school in Ohio.

Then while driving to work at the university in 2016, she lost control of her car on a busy street. First, she could not get it to accelerate, then she could not get it to stop.

"The light was red, but I went flying through the intersection," she said. "I thought something was wrong with my car. I thought, 'It's my car, it's not me.'"

Luckily, she didn't hit anyone, but did get a flat tire and kept driving 15 minutes to her work parking lot.

Once there, she realized the faculty parking lot was crowded, and her usual parking spot was already taken. So, she parked in the back, facing away from the university and, turned the engine off. On any other day, these details would have been insignificant, but now they are engrained in her memory.

"I remember putting the car in park and then that was it. I couldn't move. I was paralyzed," she said.

She was stuck alone in her car on an unusually hot day only able to move the left side of her body.

"Never in my wildest dream did I think about calling anybody for help," she said. "I didn't want to call my husband, call the university, like nobody, because I didn't want to bother people."

So, she sat in her car for more than two hours until she voice texted an incoherent message on Facebook that caused her sister, a nurse, to call her.

Immediately, her sister recognized Rajini's behavior and slurred speech as stroke signs. She called Rajini's husband, who alerted campus police to scour the parking lot for her car.

"I remember hearing the ambulance," she said. "By then, I couldn't walk. I had lost all bladder control. I lost all movements. I couldn't talk. They had to carry me into the ambulance."

Her family met her at the hospital, where her stroke was confirmed. Her doctor told her that she likely had the stroke as soon as she left her house that morning. A clot went to the left side of her brain, paralyzing her right side. That is why pushing the gas and brake pedals was difficult when she was driving.

"It was really hard to accept that I had a stroke because I thought I'm too young, way too young," said Rajini, who was 51 at the time. "I was just in shock. I couldn't believe this happened to me, and then my

life just changed from there on."

She now prioritizes her health, limits the stress in her life and says "no" more frequently. Healing from her stroke also included working with a speech therapist and going to counseling.

"Putting myself first is really empowering," she said. "I don't mean in a selfish way, but I tell people, 'Look, I went through hard challenges with my stroke, and I really apologize. I can't do this, but here's why.'"

Now 59, Rajini enjoys being an empty nester with her husband and having more time to travel, attend concerts and spend time with family and friends. She also uses this time in her life to empower other women.

"It's extremely important for women to connect with other women because we need a sisterhood to support each other," she said. "I always say we don't have to go through the same situation, but we can have the same feelings of not being able to do what we used to do. And that's OK because that is what makes us stronger together, supporting each other."



HEALTH CARE DISCLAIMER:

This site and its services do not constitute the practice of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to your health care provider for diagnosis and treatment, including your specific medical needs. If you have or suspect that you have a medical problem or condition, please contact a qualified health care professional immediately. If you are in the United States and experiencing a medical emergency, call 911 or call for emergency medical help immediately. In such an emergency, wait for an ambulance rather than driving to the hospital.

2025 Circle of Red



Circle of Red®

Circle of Red is Go Red for Women’s annual giving society, made up of passionate individuals who are in the fight against heart disease and stroke in women to win. Members use their influence, generosity and passion to help increase awareness of cardiovascular disease - the leading cause of death in women - and to inspire women to take charge of their health. They are leaders in their communities and families. For many, the fight against heart disease is personal. As some of the Go Red for Women movement’s greatest champions, Circle of Red members not only help save lives, but they are the heart of the American Heart Association’s mission.



Carolyn Williams Francis
2025 Circle of Red Chair



From L to R:
Top Row (From Left to Right): Jennifer Edwards, Erin McFarland, Devray Kirkland, Jenny Barnes, Janica Pierce Tucker
Middle Row (From Left to Right): Rochelle Bailey, Veronica Knuth, Pam Kerstetter, Tauana McDonald, Terri Hill, Heather Brilliant, Jayme Smoot
Bottom Row (From Left to Right): Evelyn Smith, Carolyn Williams Francis, Marchelle Moore, Amanda McCullouch, Laxmi Mehta, Nancy Tobbe

Not Pictured:
Anne Albers, Lisa & Bruce Bachmann, George Barrett, Tracy Davidson, Jane Endres, Laura Gravelin, Jane Grote Abell, Michele Holcomb, Brenda Houston Baird, Pamela Hutchinson, Lisa Ingram, Janet Jackson, Donna James, Mike & Linda Kaufman, Unhee Kim, Catherine Krawczeski, Susan Krohne, Erika Lamont, Mel McAfee, K.C. McCallister, Nancy & John McEwan, Bob Phillips, Mindy Price, Luciana Ramsey, Lisa Rogers, Elizabeth Seely, Amy Shore, Ola Snow, Kara Trott, Sharon Tackett, Dawn Tyler Lee, Melinda Urani, Carole Watkins, Anne Zavarella



2025 Go Red for Women Executive Leadership Team

The Go Red for Women Executive Leadership Team leads and inspires the Central Ohio community to raise awareness and funds for the Go Red for Women movement. This powerhouse team of women use their voices and share their stories so that women everywhere can live longer, healthier lives.

2025 Go Red for Women Chair Marchelle Moore Encova Insurance	Susan Krohne M/I Homes	Luciana Ramsey The LTR Collective	Janica Tucker Pierce Taft Law
Jenny Barnes	Erika Lamont Connect the Dots Consulting	Lisa Rogers Fisher Management Partners	Dawn Tyler Lee Forrest Street Consulting
Jennifer Edwards Porter Wright	Mel McAfee Victoria’s Secret & Co.	Evelyn Smith Dell Technologies	Melinda Urani Avaap
Veronica Knuth Quantum Health	Amanda McCullouch Mount Carmel Health System	Jayme Smoot Nationwide	Carolyn Williams Francis Williams Interior Designs, Inc.
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