



**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL: 1 p.m. MST., March 31, 2014**

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## **American Heart Association Announces Gift of \$4.6 Million to Expand and Enhance Heart Attack Care in Rural Montana**

***Mission: Lifeline*® aims to improve outcomes for heart attack patients in rural areas**

**Press Conference, March 31, 1 p.m., MST, Capitol, Governor's Reception Room**

**HELENA, March, 31, 2014** — The American Heart Association is pleased to announce a gift of \$4.6 million from The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, one of the nation's largest foundations, to implement a three year *Mission: Lifeline* initiative in Montana.

*Mission: Lifeline* helps identify the gaps that lead to slower and less effective cardiac patient care. The program will work with healthcare providers in the state to close those gaps through changes in protocols and processes and by providing resources such as life-saving equipment. The funding for this initiative will enhance existing efforts in Montana.

“This initiative represents a significant investment in Montana’s healthcare system, especially in our rural areas,” said Governor Steve Bullock. “We are pleased to be partnering with the Helmsley Charitable Trust, the American Heart Association, and other private and nonprofit organizations across the state, to provide these important, lifesaving services to our citizens.”

The initiative will be implemented over three-years with funding from key partners that share a commitment to improving outcomes for patients in rural Montana. The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, the lead funder, is providing a grant of \$4.6 million.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of Americans have the most serious type of heart attack known as an ST-elevated myocardial infarction, or STEMI, in which blood flow is completely blocked to a portion of the heart. Unless the blockage is eliminated quickly, the patient’s health and life are at serious risk. Currently, around two-thirds of STEMI patients fail to receive the best available treatments to restore blood flow.

“The outcome of STEMI events depends greatly on the care patients receive and the timeframe in which they receive it,” said Kathy Rogers, Executive Vice President of the American Heart Association Western States Affiliate. “The American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology’s guidelines recommend that balloon angioplasty be performed within 90 minutes or less. *Mission: Lifeline* seeks to save lives by closing the gaps that separate STEMI patients from timely access to appropriate treatments.”

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## ***American Heart Association Announces Mission: Lifeline Launch – 2***

According to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Montana Hospital Association, 1799 people were hospitalized in Montana for acute heart attack in 2012, and of those, 777 were STEMIs. *Mission: Lifeline* is focused on improving the system of care for patients who suffer from a STEMI each year, improving that system will ultimately improve care for all heart attack patients.

“We are grateful to the Helmsley Charitable Trust for their investment in Montana,” said Steven Helgerson, MD, MPH, State Medical Officer. “Along with the *Mission: Lifeline* initiative, it will help Montana to better coordinate heart attack care, which will mean better outcomes for patients, and more lives saved. Time is muscle when someone is having a heart attack. Getting a patient proper treatment faster, especially in rural areas, is critical.”

In collaboration with stakeholders representing hospitals, individual ambulance services and regional EMS Medical Directors, the project will enhance many critical elements of an optimal STEMI system of care: a system-wide data tool for quality measurement and improvement; ongoing medical provider training and STEMI education; coordination of protocols for rural EMS and hospital personnel; regional plans for rapid transport and/or transfer of patients; and, a public education campaign on heart attack signs and symptoms and the need to activate the 9-1-1 system. Targeted funding will be provided to assist hospitals and ambulance services in acquiring essential ECG equipment and training.

The Helmsley Charitable Trust and the American Heart Association launched *Mission: Lifeline* in South Dakota in July 2010 with a commitment of \$8.4 million from the Trust. From 2011 through 2014, the Trust also generously committed additional funding for *Mission: Lifeline* in four other states: \$4.4 million for North Dakota, nearly \$6 million for Wyoming, \$4.6 million for Minnesota, and most recently \$4.1 million for Nebraska. With the Montana initiative, the total commitment from the Trust for *Mission: Lifeline* has reached \$32.2 million.

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### **About the American Heart Association**

The American Heart Association is devoted to saving people from heart disease and stroke – America’s No. 1 and No. 4 killers. We team with millions of volunteers to fund innovative research, fight for stronger public health policies, and provide lifesaving tools and information to prevent and treat these diseases. The Dallas-based association is the nation’s oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. The Western States Affiliate serves a 10-state region (Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington). To learn more or to get involved, call 1-800-AHA-USA1, visit [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org) or call any of our offices around the country. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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**About The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust**

The Helmsley Charitable Trust aspires to improve lives by supporting effective nonprofits in a variety of selected areas. Since 2008, when the Trust began its active grant making, it has committed more than \$1 billion to a wide range of charitable organizations. The Trust's Rural Healthcare Program funds innovative projects that use information technologies to connect rural patients to emergency medical care, bring the latest medical therapies to patients in remote areas, and provide state-of-the-art training for rural hospitals and EMS personnel. To date, this program has awarded more than \$230 million to organizations and initiatives in the upper Midwest states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, Minnesota, Iowa, and Montana. For more information on the Trust and its programs, please visit [www.helmsleytrust.org](http://www.helmsleytrust.org).

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