FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Tuesday, June 10, 2014

MEDIA CONTACT:
Francesca Fabile Minas
206-834-8611 or francesca.minas@heart.org

Stroke survivor Karen Dionne honored with Outstanding Advocacy Efforts Award by American Heart Association Western States Affiliate

TACOMA, Wash. – Stroke survivor Karen Dionne of Graham, Wash is the recipient of the 2013-2014 Outstanding Advocacy Efforts Award given by the American Heart Association’s Western States Affiliate, which includes Washington and nine other states. The award recognizes the exceptional efforts by a volunteer within the affiliate to champion the organization’s public policy priorities.

Dionne, a long-time volunteer and current board member for the American Heart Association’s South Sound Division, received the honors during an award ceremony on June 9, 2014 in Los Angeles, Calif. “Karen is a dedicated advocate,” said Lindsay Hovind, government relations director for the American Heart Association in Washington state. “She has worked tirelessly to support a number of policy priorities including CPR education in our high schools, tobacco prevention funding, and childhood obesity legislation.”

Karen Dionne’s volunteer involvement started when she helped establish the Go Red Ambassador program in Tacoma, whose purpose is to educate the local community about the risks for heart disease and stroke in women. Since then her involvement has continued to grow and she became more involved in advocacy work because of a close friend that survived sudden cardiac arrest. Dionne supported the campaign to require CPR education in Washington high schools with a personal passion. As a member of the association’s You’re the Cure group of advocates, she has contacted and met with legislators in Olympia, written many letters to ask for support in the legislature, and even traveled one year to Washington, DC to meet with lawmakers at the Capitol.

Dionne suffered a stroke at the age of 37, just months before her wedding, and credits her recovery to the man she married, Michael, who recognized the warning signs of stroke and sought medical help immediately. She continues to share her story at the local and national level in order to educate others about stroke and the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. She also runs a support group for young stroke survivors, Reclaiming Ourselves.

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. To learn more or join us, call 1-800-AHA-USA1 or any of our offices around the country, or visit heart.org.