

THE

# PULSE



THE  
POWER  
OF FOOD



American  
Heart  
Association.

# FROM THE CEO



Thank you for your passionate engagement in the American Heart Association, signifying your extraordinary dedication to our lifesaving mission.

Generous supporters like you have enabled the AHA to transform the health landscape for 100 years through research funding, policy advocacy, community partnership, consumer education, health tech innovation and so much more.

In this, our centennial year, we celebrate those achievements and our shared vision for a second century that exponentially advances heart and brain health.

The power of food to improve health is the focus of this issue of *The Pulse*, newly redesigned exclusively for Society members. The AHA is working to identify and help bring evidence-based strategies for incorporating healthy food into health care delivery — an approach known as food is medicine. First announced at the September 2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health, we recently rebranded this initiative as Health Care by Food™, and I am excited to share our early progress with you.

You will also read about the many ways your fellow Society members are advancing nutrition and food security in their communities, and I hope their journeys will inspire yours.

Thank you for your commitment to the American Heart Association. We could not do this work without you. I look forward to working with you to advance health and hope for everyone, everywhere in our second century.

With heart,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy A. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Nancy Brown

Chief Executive Officer, American Heart Association  
Member, Cor Vitae Society  
Member, Paul Dudley White Legacy Society



# CONTENTS

- 4 **FOOD IS MEDICINE**  
The American Heart Association's Health Care by Food™ initiative is in motion
- 8 **INSIDE INTERVIEW**  
Q + A with our National Executive Vice President of Consumer Health Solutions
- 10 **A HELPFUL HINT AT THE GROCERY STORE**  
The American Heart Association's Heart-Check mark explained
- 12 **"TICKING TIME BOMB"**  
After surviving a heart attack at 35, healthy nutrition gave her a new chance at life
- 14 **WHEN PASSIONS BECOMES PERSONAL**  
A Knoxville couple's passion fuels impact in their community
- 16 **FRESH PRODUCE BY THE BUSLOAD**  
A converted school bus brings fresh food to Boston
- 18 **ACCELERATING THE FUTURE OF HEALTH**  
A Business Accelerator grant winner's passion for nutrition
- 20 **LEAVING A TRAIL OF POSITIVE IMPACT**  
A long-time volunteer and donor leaves his mark
- 22 **NOURISHING BODIES AND SOULS**  
Making the Bronx a healthy destination in NYC
- 24 **FULL-CIRCLE MOMENT**  
A prolific researcher leaves a full-circle legacy gift
- 25 **GET GROWING**  
A celebrity chef shares tips on starting a simple garden



# FOOD IS MEDICINE

---

## EXAMINING FOOD AND ITS POWER TO HEAL

An estimated 90% of the \$4.3 trillion annual cost of health care in the United States is spent on medical care for chronic health conditions, many of them diet-related, including cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes and obesity.

The American Heart Association recognizes the importance of ensuring an adequate supply of nutritious food to combat diet-related chronic diseases, or, using food as medicine.

### OUR VISION

The Association's food is medicine initiative was first announced in September 2022 at the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health. Our vision is to accelerate a future in which millions of patients receive the benefit of a more holistic approach to diet and health, health care professionals and practitioners know how food is medicine programs can help prevent and manage disease, and payors have sufficient, objective cost and effectiveness evidence for reimbursing food is medicine programs.

### WHAT IS FOOD IS MEDICINE?

"Food is medicine" refers to a medical treatment or preventive intervention for patients who have a diet-related health risk or condition and/or are experiencing nutrition or food insecurity. Patients are referred to these interventions by a health care provider, health care organization or health insurance plan.

Evidence indicates that incorporating food is medicine programs into the health care system can improve health outcomes, reduce health care use and costs, address health disparities and reduce nutrition and food insecurity for patients living with chronic diseases.

### A ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE

An American Heart Association Presidential Advisory on food is medicine, published in September 2023, serves as a roadmap for the research, advocacy, quality measurement, professional education and public awareness that will lead to widespread adoption and coverage of food is medicine (FIM) interventions that improve health and are cost-effective.

The advisory establishes that:

- Healthy, nutritious food may be a useful strategy in the health care setting to treat and prevent chronic disease.
- FIM has the potential to improve health outcomes for millions of patients.
- A coordinated research approach is needed to compare how well FIM interventions prevent and treat disease compared to standard medical care.
- Research must be complemented by efforts in advocacy, quality and education to fully incorporate FIM into the health care system.

Kevin G. Volpp, M.D., Ph.D., FAHA, chair of the Presidential Advisory writing group and the scientific lead for the Association's food is medicine initiative, states, "By addressing research gaps and integrating research efforts in collaboration with stakeholders nationwide, we will fuel cross-sector efforts that ensure food is medicine programs improve health costs effectively and are feasible in practice."

The American Heart Association's now-named **Health Care by Food™** initiative is building the evidence needed to show clinical and cost effectiveness so patients with chronic disease or with risk factors for disease can access effective food is medicine programs as a covered benefit through health insurance.

With anchor support from The Rockefeller Foundation and contributions from inaugural collaborator Kroger, and with additional support from Instacart, Kaiser Permanente and Walmart Foundation, the Association's Health Care by Food initiative is engaging in scientific research and public policy advocacy to promote the adoption of interventions that reduce chronic health conditions and curb health care costs.

The initiative's research efforts launched in January 2024, with funds awarded to foundational research projects across the country led by experts in the food and nutrition, behavioral science, epidemiology and cardiovascular research fields.



*Dr. Rajiv J. Shah, President of The Rockefeller Foundation, and Nancy Brown, CEO of the American Heart Association*



## Health Care Food™

Accelerating the Integration of Food Is Medicine in Health Care



***"TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF FOOD IS MEDICINE AND MAKE IT A REGULAR AND REIMBURSABLE COMPONENT OF HEALTH CARE, WE NEED AN AMBITIOUS AND COORDINATED RESEARCH APPROACH."***

- Kevin G. Volpp, M.D., Ph.D., FAHA  
Scientific Lead, Health Care by Food  
American Heart Association

## WHAT MIGHT A FOOD IS MEDICINE PROGRAM LOOK LIKE FOR A PATIENT?

Food is medicine approaches commonly include:

- **Medically Tailored Groceries (MTGs)** include a selection of minimally prepared grocery items prescribed by a registered dietitian nutritionist for patients with a defined medical diagnosis who can shop or pick up and prepare food at home. MTGs may also be referred to as food ‘farmacies’ or healthy food prescriptions.
- **Medically Tailored Meals (MTMs)** are utilized to address diet related diseases and food access among higher-risk individuals. MTMs provide home delivery of fully prepared meals designed by a registered dietitian to meet the specific dietary needs of an individual living with one or more chronic diseases.

This intervention has been considered for patients living with chronic diseases who are unable to shop for or prepare meals for themselves, such as patients following a hospitalization for congestive heart failure who are frail and have difficulty ambulating.

- **Healthy Food Prescription Programs** (also called produce prescription programs) are programs where providers “prescribe” fruits and vegetables, or other healthy foods, to at-risk patients in the form of coupons or vouchers for local farmers’ markets, grocery stores or mobile markets.

Food prescription programs are typically offered to people living with chronic diseases that are exacerbated by unhealthy food and who have nutrition and food insecurity.



***“IT WILL BE MUCH MORE COST-EFFECTIVE. IT WILL BE MUCH MORE PALATABLE, REALLY, TO PATIENTS THAN TAKING A PILL EVERY DAY. AND I THINK WE HAVE A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW THAT IT ACTUALLY WILL IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR THE LONG RUN.”***

- Donald M. Lloyd-Jones, MD, ScM, FAHA  
Chair, Dept. of Preventative Medicine, School of Medicine, Northwestern University  
Past President (2021-22), American Heart Association



# INSIDE INTERVIEW

## WITH JULIANA CRAWFORD

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF CONSUMER HEALTH SOLUTIONS  
AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION



**Q** Juliana, your career with the American Heart Association started 20 years ago supporting marketing for the Heart-Check mark program in 2004. Now you've recently been named as the National Executive Vice President of Consumer Health Solutions leading the Association's **Health Care by Food™** initiative. Does it feel full circle from when you started?

**A** 100%. You could say when I entered into the Association, I had a passion for healthy living and, specifically, nutrition. I had a great interest in helping people make better choices and beginning with a program like the Heart-Check mark was a great fit. Now being able to lead an initiative to help people make better choices and live healthier goes far beyond nutrition information found in a grocery store - it's getting healthy food into the hands of those that need it most. The Association has been one of the leading voices on food and nutrition for decades, and I feel fortunate to have been here for my part of it. The Health Care by Food initiative is the right next step for the organization to take. If you had told me twenty years ago that my work on the Heart-Check mark would have evolved into this, I probably couldn't have imagined it. I couldn't have imagined it, but I'm so glad it's happening.

**Q** Where would you want to see food is medicine efforts be 10 years from now, and what do you think it might look like integrated into the health care system?

**A** I want every person who has a need to have easy, friction-free access to healthy food, and I want it to be routine and like any other component of their health care. Nutrition is like any other vital that should be monitored, it should be another active part of health care that everyone can access and experience. Many doctors currently don't have the time, bandwidth, or experience to have these types of conversations with patients, but I'd love to see it happen in the future. It would be ideal to have doctors and other health care professionals having these types of conversations with patients regularly, with resources ready to provide.

I want to see healthy food delivery as part of the care continuum, considering the issues of food and nutrition as part of that care plan. In 10 years, or maybe even sooner, we could see nutrition embedded into the pharmacy and health care institutions, part of the central health care journey instead of on the side.

**Q** Part of the vision for your division of the Association, Consumer Health Solutions, is “bridging science and the marketplace to meet the needs of people – now.” Is that what the American Heart Association is doing with the **Health Care by Food** initiative?

**A** Yes, but with an important caveat. For such a transformational change to take place within the food is medicine space, we need compelling evidence showing which approaches can be brought to scale and how; discovering and testing the science, learning from those with lived experience, and preparing for widespread health care systems change.

This is a multi-year effort with every action in every year making a difference and also culminating in the ultimate desired result. Along the way, we will bridge science to communities and providers in meaningful ways as we drive forward to the full intended result.

**Q** **Health Care by Food** is a significant, multi-million dollar initiative. How will we get there, and how can a donor interested in this initiative get more involved?

**A** We will continue to pursue collaboration with stakeholders in a variety of sectors, such as government agencies, health care systems, pharmacies, grocers, retailers, deliverers, etc. While these sectors are inherently diverse and not often connected, when we can bring this type of cross-sector support together systemically, we have the real ability to accelerate Health Care by Food’s ultimate purpose.

There is a great need for financial support across the full initiative, which will advance strategies in research, Federal and state-level advocacy, consumer engagement, capacity building and other important work.

**“WE WERE BUILT TO SOLVE THESE KINDS OF PROBLEMS, AND WE ONLY CONSIDER OURSELVES SUCCESSFUL IF WE HELP THOSE THAT NEED IT MOST. THAT’S THE GOAL BEHIND FOOD IS MEDICINE - HEALTHIER LIVES FOR ALL.”**

- Juliana Crawford  
National Executive Vice President, Consumer Health Solutions  
American Heart Association



# A HELPFUL HINT AT THE GROCERY STORE

## HOW THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION'S HEART-CHECK FOOD CERTIFICATION PROGRAM WORKS

The Heart-Check mark makes it easy to spot heart-healthy foods in the grocery store. Simply look for the name of the American Heart Association along with our familiar red heart with a white check mark on the package. When you spot the American Heart Association's Heart-Check mark, you'll instantly know the food has been certified to meet our nutrition requirements. It's a good first step in creating an overall sensible eating plan.

The Heart-Check program complies with 10 different health claims in 13 food categories. Products must meet nutrition requirements that are based on science recommendations from American Heart Association statements and must comply with FDA and/or USDA regulations for making a coronary heart disease claim.

When you see the Heart-Check mark on a food product, you know it has been put through a robust certification process:

**STEP 1:** The American Heart Association must approve the company for participation, and companies must formally agree to all policies of the Heart-Check program.

**STEP 2:** A product's nutrition profile must meet Heart-Check nutrition criteria and regulatory requirements for making coronary heart disease claims. Companies submit administrative fees to the American Heart Association to cover program operating expenses.

**STEP 3:** All use of the Heart-Check mark on product packaging and promotional and advertising materials must be pre-approved.

**STEP 4:** Companies are contractually obligated to keep their products compliant and renew certification on a regular basis as scheduled.

*The American Heart Association Heart-Check Food Certification Program is designed to help consumers make informed choices about the foods they purchase. The nutrition requirements are food-based and intended for healthy people over age two. The Heart-Check program is not a dietary solution for any particular condition or disease. People with medical conditions or dietary restrictions should follow the advice of their healthcare professionals.*



# CHECK FOR THE HEART-CHECK MARK



This is what it takes to be Heart-Check certified\*:

## SOURCE OF NUTRIENTS

**Beneficial Nutrients (naturally occurring):**  
10% or more of the Daily Value of 1 of 5 nutrients (vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, calcium, protein or dietary fiber)

## LIMITED IN BAD FATS

**Saturated Fat:**  
1g or less per standard serving size and 15% or less calories from saturated fat

**Trans Fat:**  
Less than 0.5g per label serving size and per standard serving size. Products containing partially hydrogenated oils are not eligible for certification

## LIMITED IN SODIUM

**Sodium:**  
One of four sodium limits applies depending on the particular food category: up to 140mg, 240mg or 260mg per label serving and per standard

*Understanding how to read nutrition labels is important!*

 **SERVING SIZE**

This will help you determine the right portion size and the total number of portions per package.

**Nutrition Facts**

8 servings per container  
**Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)**

---

**Amount per serving**  
**Calories 230**

---

% Daily Value\*

|                               |            |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Total Fat</b> 8g           | <b>10%</b> |
| Saturated Fat 1g              | <b>5%</b>  |
| Trans Fat 0g                  |            |
| <b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg        | <b>0%</b>  |
| <b>Sodium</b> 160mg           | <b>7%</b>  |
| <b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g | <b>13%</b> |
| Dietary Fiber 4g              | <b>14%</b> |
| Total Sugars 12g              |            |
| Includes 10g Added Sugars     | <b>20%</b> |
| <b>Protein</b> 3g             |            |
| Vitamin D 2mcg                | <b>10%</b> |
| Calcium 260mg                 | <b>20%</b> |
| Iron 8mg                      | <b>45%</b> |
| Potassium 240mg               | <b>6%</b>  |

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

 **CALORIES**

Information in the label is based on a diet of 2,000 kcal per day. Calorie needs vary depending upon age, gender, activity level, and goals.

 **FATS**

Replacing foods that are high in saturated fat with healthier options can lower blood cholesterol levels and improve lipid profiles.

 **SODIUM**

Eating less sodium reduces risk of heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, osteoporosis, stomach cancer and even headaches.

 **CARBOHYDRATES**

Carbohydrates (carbs) have the biggest impact on your blood sugar. Lower your carb count by eating a smaller portion size.

 **NUTRIENTS**

Labels include nutrient measurements in milligrams. Check here to find recommended daily values.

\*All requirements listed apply to Standard Certification, see [heartcheck.org/requirements](http://heartcheck.org/requirements).

# AFTER SURVIVING A HEART ATTACK AT 35, SHE FELT LIKE A 'TICKING TIME BOMB'

THE ONCOLOGY TECHNICIAN FOCUSED ON HEALTHY NUTRITION TO GIVE HERSELF A SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE

Jennifer Valentine's colleague, longtime friend and neighbor Rebecca McCormack picked her up early at her home in York, South Carolina, for a ride to the airport. The oncology technicians at a cancer center were off to a conference in Salt Lake City.

At the airport, they had breakfast at a fast-food restaurant before the 4.5-hour flight. Valentine ordered fried hashed browns and a gravy biscuit.

Such a rich breakfast was not Valentine's recent routine. Two months earlier, she'd started exercising and eating more nutritious meals. During much of her 35 years, Valentine's weight had yo-yoed.



*Jennifer Valentine with husband Jay and son Blake before her heart attack. Photos courtesy of Jennifer Valentine*

She had recently shed 12 pounds from a high of 229 (she's 5-foot-6) and wanted to lose much more.

On the plane, she watched a movie and took photos of the Rocky Mountains from her window seat.

Suddenly her breath became labored. She couldn't understand why. She'd never been afraid of flying.

Just breathe normally, maybe this is what a panic attack feels like, she thought.

She told McCormack that she felt a fleeting pain in her left shoulder. Then Valentine went to the bathroom. While there, she became nauseous and then overheated. Back in her seat, she started to shake so badly she couldn't hold her drink.

McCormack helped her increase the ventilation above her head. She wondered if her friend could be having a heart attack but didn't want to alarm her. "Do you want me to call for help?" she asked Valentine.

"No, we'll be there within an hour," Valentine said. She didn't want to make a commotion.

When they landed, McCormack carried her and Valentine's bags. On the way to the terminal, Valentine became incredibly thirsty. She started to cry. McCormack sat her down and got her some water. Just as suddenly as they started, Valentine's symptoms stopped.

At the hotel, Valentine went to take a nap. She called her husband to let him know what happened.

She got up to comb her hair and get ready to sign in at the conference. Once again, she felt out of breath. She went to McCormack's room in tears. They called a doctor at their workplace for advice.

"Get to urgent care or an ER now," he told her.

At urgent care, a nurse performed an electrocardiogram. She tore the results off the machine and left the room. When she returned a few minutes later, she told Valentine: "An ambulance is on the way. You need to go to the ER."

By this point, Valentine was feeling normal again.

An ultrasound and an echocardiogram showed no issues. When doctors said they were taking her to the cardiac catheterization lab for further diagnostic tests, Valentine protested, but ultimately relented.

An hour later, when they woke her up, a doctor told her she'd had a heart attack. He showed her two images.

One was of her right coronary artery, 100% blocked. Blood wasn't flowing. The other was after they placed a stent. Blood was flowing.

Doctors told Valentine that her heart attack was from a plaque rupture and that the cause was genetic. They also said she had a 65% blockage in her main coronary artery, but they would not place a stent until it became further blocked.

Valentine knew there were heart problems on her father's side of the family but hadn't been concerned. "When you're younger, you don't think it will happen to you," she said.

McCormack stayed with Valentine the first night at the hospital. Her husband arrived the next day.

Valentine was determined to continue to lose weight and exercise. Although she couldn't change her genetics, she knew that becoming healthier would reduce her risk of heart disease.

But once she was home, she panicked. "I felt like I was a ticking time bomb," Valentine said. "Anytime I was trying to plan groceries, I'd just start crying. I didn't even know what I could eat."

She spoke with a nutritionist and started following recommendations from the American Heart Association. She restricted her sodium and saturated fat intake. She changed her bread and flour from white to whole wheat. She cut out most processed foods. She also started walking daily.

Still, she was anxious about having another heart attack. She started to have panic attacks and took medication for anxiety and depression. Sometimes she would go to bed at 7:30 p.m. after her husband, Jay, and their son, Blake, then 8, would finish dinner.

She credits one of the doctors at her practice with helping her talk through her anxiety, learning to relax and giving her a more positive outlook.

In the years since the heart attack, which happened in 2018, Valentine has lost 92 pounds. Last summer she stopped taking anxiety medication.

Valentine, now 40, frequently talks about her challenges and achievements on her TikTok page, where she has more than 19,000 followers.

"It's been a great way to reach out and help other people," she said.

Valentine also inspired McCormack to eat better and exercise more. The two often meet up at their local gym.

"I was a horrible eater, eating for convenience instead of for my body," said McCormack, who also has heart disease in her family. "Watching Jennifer helped me learn to make better choices." Each helps the other strive toward a longer, healthier life.



***"ANYTIME I WAS TRYING TO PLAN GROCERIES, I'D JUST START CRYING. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT I COULD EAT."***

- Jennifer Valentine

# WHEN PASSION BECOMES PERSONAL

## A KNOXVILLE COUPLE'S FIGHT AGAINST HEART DISEASE



*Ken and Leslie Parent  
at the Knoxville Heart Ball*

Ken and Leslie Parent married right out of college. After 43 years of marriage, the couple understands the importance of building a strong foundation for their family and their community. Ken's career started at Mobil Oil and eventually led him to Pilot Company headquartered in Knoxville, Tennessee. After moving around quite a bit, the Parents planted roots in Knoxville in 2001 where Ken served as Pilot Company's Chief Operator and then President before retiring two years ago.

Blessed with good fortune, the couple believes in sharing their prosperity. The American Heart Association was a natural fit, fueled by Pilot Company's longstanding commitment to the organization through the "Life is Why We Give" retail campaign and their own family history. Both Ken's grandfather and father suffered from heart disease, with his father's heart attack in his mid-50s serving as a poignant reminder to practice healthy habits.

Leslie's parents both suffered strokes and was ultimately the cause of her father's death. "You know that's in your DNA," Leslie says of the potential inherited stroke risk.

Ken and Leslie co-chaired the Knoxville Heart Ball in 2018 and Ken is the immediate past Chair of the American Heart Association's Board of Directors in Knoxville. While on the local board, Ken learned more about nutrition security issues in their community. According to the American Heart Association, one in eight people in Knox County live in a food desert. The Parents were driven to do more, particularly in East Tennessee. "There are 13 food deserts in East Tennessee," Ken stressed. "In some of these areas, people are taking two buses to go to a food bank."

"There's a lot of inequality in health," says Leslie. "Unfortunately, where you are born, where you grow up, and your socioeconomic status plays a big part in how you will be health wise. I would like that to even out." With support from the Parents, the American Heart Association placed eight commercial-grade cold storage units with local food pantries and community and faith-based organizations in East Tennessee communities to increase their cold food storage capacity of fresh or frozen produce, dairy and lean meats.

Beverly Miller, the American Heart Association's Executive Director in Knoxville, said "Leslie and Ken Parent's dedication and leadership is invaluable to our community. Through their gift, 7,800 people a month now have access to healthy food in zip codes that struggle to access this type of nutrition. We are so thankful to see their generosity make a direct impact to those who need it the most."

Supporting the American Heart Association through their Donor Advised Fund made giving easy and strategic, prompting them to think long-term. They carefully select a handful of organizations where their impact will be significant. As their funds grow through investment returns, they can allocate additional funds annually. Their Donor Advised Fund is also a legacy they plan to pass on to their children.

The Parents involve their children in local American Heart Association events, like the Knoxville Heart Walk, and their daughter-in-law now serves on the committee for the Knoxville Heart Ball. Leslie and Ken say they are both “happy to promote health for future generations.”



*Robin Rolland (L) and Dottie Bradford with Compassion Ministries unveil one of the donated cold storage units installed in their food pantry. Photos courtesy of the AHA's Knoxville office.*



*One of Fresh Truck's retrofitted school buses (Photo courtesy of About Fresh)*

# FRESH PRODUCE BY THE BUSLOAD

## BOSTON'S FRESH TRUCK HELPS NEIGHBORHOODS CONNECT TO HEALTHY MEALS

Three converted school buses rumble through 18 low-income Boston neighborhoods. They carry the cargo that for too long has been scarce: fresh, healthy food.

These mobile grocery stores, called Fresh Truck, bring some 30 to 40 varieties of affordable vegetables and fruits to homes most in need. The aim is to improve health, said Josh Trautwein, who runs the social enterprise About Fresh with co-founder Annika Morgan.

Nearly 40 million Americans live in homes that don't always have enough food for everyone in the family, according to Feeding America. In three of the poorest areas of greater Boston – Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan – there are more fast food restaurants per capita than all other neighborhoods combined, and those neighborhoods experience the city's worst health outcomes, Trautwein said.



Trautwein, 32, got a taste of food insecurity at his first job out of college, at a health center coordinating a nutrition program for low-income families. When the only grocery store temporarily closed (and later reopened as a pricey chain store), he began to understand how food deserts affect people's ability to eat a healthy diet.

Fresh Truck helps fill the need – for good food and education.

There's a lot of diversity across Boston neighborhoods, so it carries cultural staples like yucca, mangoes and plantains. Trautwein and team skip the lectures about bad foods, instead focusing on sharing with kids how "healthy food has you at your best" at school and for sports, for energy and for mood. "We're trying to create opportunities for kids to fall in love with healthy food," Trautwein said.

Fresh Truck doesn't charge typical grocery store margins. Fresh Truck also partners with local medical providers and nonprofits to host pop-up markets where they sell healthy foods. Community partners offer everything from blood pressure testing to culturally appropriate cooking classes.

But Trautwein is on a path to do more.

Last year, his nonprofit created FreshConnect, a digital platform to make it possible for health care providers and other organizations to prescribe food as medicine – food that folks can buy on Fresh Truck through a gift card system. In return, providers get information on their patients' eating habits to analyze the health impact. "Food is one of the principal drivers of chronic disease and health care utilization," Trautwein said. "A lot of people get sick because they don't have money for healthy food or it's not close by in their community." To make change, evidence matters. "We're going to be able to make more of a data-driven case for impact," Trautwein said. A recent investment from the American Heart Association's Social Impact Funds will help FreshConnect reach even more patients.

**The American Heart Association's Social Impact Funds** are funded by our philanthropic donors — individual philanthropists and family and corporate foundations. We are able to launch Social Impact Funds in various cities with the backing of supporters like you who are passionate about systemic, community-led health and economic solutions in their communities.

Supporters of the American Heart Association's Social Impact Funds help scale the impact of local social entrepreneurs who are working to solve health disparities that present the greatest challenges in their communities. If you are interested in accelerating transformation alongside the American Heart Association and want to learn more about the Social Impact Funds, speak to your staff partner or visit [heart.org/socialimpactfund](http://heart.org/socialimpactfund).



# ACCELERATING THE FUTURE OF HEALTH

AN EMPOWERED TO SERVE BUSINESS ACCELERATOR GRANT WINNER IS PASSIONATE ABOUT HEALTHY EATING



*Above: Chef Ashley Keyes and C.H.O.I.C.E.S. volunteer.  
Right: Ashley conducting a community cooking class.  
Photos courtesy of C.H.O.I.C.E.S.*

Ashley Keyes is the executive chef at the Center Helping Obesity In Children End Successfully (C.H.O.I.C.E.S.) and recently won the 2023 “Fan Favorite” grant award from the American Heart Association’s EmPOWERED to Serve Business Accelerator™ Program.

Ashley has long had a passion for cooking. Growing up, her grandmother was a home economics teacher and Ashley could usually be found following her around the kitchen. She started cooking at the age of 13. She spent several summers attending culinary summer camps and was quickly latching onto the idea of becoming a chef, but health issues were at risk of holding her back.

“I was 15 when I was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes and hypertension,” Ashley said. “After fighting for years, at the age of 18 and weighing 397 pounds, I made the decision to have gastric bypass surgery which saved my life.” The surgery helped her to lose over 150 pounds.

After her scary diagnosis and seeing how weight loss and a new found dedication to nutritious eating was crucial to her wellbeing, she came back to her passion of cooking - with a healthier twist. Ashley completed Le Cordon Bleu culinary school and was then selected to participate in the Disney culinary program.

Once complete, she started her own catering business and dove heart first in to her work with C.H.O.I.C.E.S., which is a parent and child resource center for those clinically diagnosed and at risk for obesity.

**“IN EVERY ZIP CODE, FOOD SHOULD BE ACCESSIBLE AND TREATED AS MEDICINE.”**

**- Ashley Keyes**

Nearly 1 in 3 kids or teens in the U.S. are overweight or obese. Research shows that nearly 70% of overweight children had at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease, and 39% had two or more. Carrying extra weight as a child or teenager can pose significant health risks, both during childhood and into adulthood.

As executive chef at C.H.O.I.C.E.S., based out of Atlanta, Ashley works to educate children and families on healthy eating and obesity prevention through their Community Teaching Kitchen Program which hosts family cooking classes, health workshops and more. "I understand the children we serve here at C.H.O.I.C.E.S. because I have walked in their shoes and I understand what their parents are going through today," said Ashley.

Compounding the risk of obesity for many is that they live in food deserts and do not have adequate or reliable access to nutritious foods. Ashley recalls the time a student at one of her family cooking classes approached her afterwards and told her he didn't have any of the groceries to cook the healthy meal they had just learned. Though C.H.O.I.C.E.S. works diligently with local food banks and pantries to help increase access to food, it quickly became apparent that in many cases the food items being distributed did not solely support a healthy diet.

Ashley and her coworkers at C.H.O.I.C.E.S. sprang into action to ensure the families attending cooking classes also leave with an ample supply of fruits, vegetables and lean proteins, and are armed with the knowledge on how to cook those items and incorporate some of the more processed and canned foods from the food pantry into overall more nutritious meals.

Ashley feels strongly that she wants to create "kitchen advocates," so that everyone knows what is in their cupboards and how to use it.

The desire to do even more through her work addressing health impact led her to apply for the EmPOWERED to Serve Business Accelerator™ Program and those that know her are not surprised she was awarded the "Fan Favorite" award.

Ashley plans to use her newly awarded grant to launch a new "Make Healthy Choices" app that will foster an increased sense of community, connection, and help the families C.H.O.I.C.E.S. serves stay in even closer communication with them on their needs. Along with an accompanying social media platform, the app will help make healthy living resources and tools immediately accessible at the users fingertips.

The American Heart Association's EmPOWERED to Serve platform harnesses the passion of individuals and organizations to overcome barriers to health equity. Through creative and innovative action in advocacy, policy, education and social change models, these community Ambassadors are the heartbeat of our mission.

Accelerator participants get access to high-quality training, make connections to like-minded, health-focused entrepreneurs, and emerge with a toolkit of skills they can apply to grow and scale the health impact of their business. Supporters of EmPOWERED to Serve and the Business Accelerator Program are helping to provide access to valuable and actionable knowledge as well as funding for businesses to achieve success and sustainability.



# LEAVING A TRAIL OF POSITIVE IMPACT

## A LONG-TIME VOLUNTEER AND DONOR LEAVES HIS MARK



*Eric Frauwirth (second from L) at a school CPR training event. Photo courtesy of Eric Frauwirth.*

As Eric Frauwirth moved throughout his life and career - from Baltimore to Boston to New Hampshire - a trail of positive impact followed him and each community prospered. He likes to joke that he has been adopted by the American Heart Association, but it seems that Eric is the one who has adopted creating longer, healthier lives as his passion.

More than 10 years ago, Eric was dean of the Stratford University Culinary School in Baltimore and had the vision to use his position to add a community kitchen to the facilities. During a meeting, someone suggested partnering with the American Heart Association in the city who had similar goals and was looking for a facility to host the kitchen. Through that partnership, Frauwirth helped to launch the first Simple Cooking with Heart Teaching Kitchen in America.

Since then, students of all ages have learned how to prepare simple, delicious, and inexpensive meals at home so they can enjoy the benefits of eating healthier and feel more confident cooking for themselves and their families. After that project, he joined the Association's newly created Young Hearts Board to focus on getting the next generation involved in the fight against heart disease and stroke.

When a new career opportunity as dean for a school in the Boston area arose, Eric once again found his way back to the American Heart Association. "A week later I was asked to join the local AHA board in Boston and I was adopted again," Eric said.

When he started working in New Hampshire for the state's department of education, he knew exactly where to turn when he wanted to help teach highschoolers how to perform Hands-Only CPR. Unlike some states which make CPR training a graduation requirement, in New Hampshire, no government agency can impose an unfunded mandate, leaving only an organization like the American Heart Association to fill the gap. As a member of the Association's local board in Manchester, New Hampshire, Eric helped launch a program allowing magnet career training education schools to teach those studying to be teachers or health care workers to be CPR trainers, allowing them to go back to their individual high schools and teach their peers the lifesaving skill.

When discussions among his fellow board of directors members turned to the importance of making a legacy gift through one's estate, Eric signed up immediately, making a gift through a beneficiary designation of his life insurance policy.

***"IT'S MY WAY OF MAKING SURE MY CONTRIBUTIONS AND LEGACY WITH THE ORGANIZATION LAST."***

**- Eric Frauwirth**



Today, over a decade after the first Simple Cooking with Heart Teaching Kitchen was launched in Baltimore, it is thriving!

Now in a new location at The UA House at Fayette in Baltimore, the kitchen remains a popular community resource offering hands-on, affordable cooking classes for individuals and groups, as well as weekly online classes.

Executive Chef Stephanie Rose teaches students of all ages how to prepare simple, delicious, and inexpensive meals at home so they can enjoy the benefits of eating healthier and feel more confident cooking for themselves and their families.

Students work with common appliances and basic cooking tools that are typically used in a standard home kitchen. Each class includes nutritional information, basic food safety and sanitation overviews, recipes and the preparation of a meal. Recipes are budget friendly, heart-healthy and align with American Heart Association dietary recommendations around sodium, sugar and fat intake.

*Photos courtesy of the Baltimore Simple Cooking with Heart Teaching Kitchen's Facebook page*





# NOURISHING BODIES AND SOULS

## A COMMUNITY FARMSTAND AIMS TO MAKE THE BRONX A HEALTHY DESTINATION IN NYC

Monica Tomlinson Francois, 66, a Bronx native, is a regular at the Morris Heights Farmstand. She visits the market every Wednesday with her daughter to purchase fresh produce. Broccoli, beets and cauliflower are their favorites. "I live a few blocks from here and my weekly trip to the local market helps me eat a variety of healthy food," she said.

In the Bronx, where health outcomes rank last among all counties in New York State, accessing fresh and affordable produce can be a challenge. The Farmstand, which is operated by GrowNYC near the Morris Heights Health Center on Burnside Avenue, with support from the American Heart

Association, Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson and NYC Councilmember Pierina Ana Sanchez, is part of a collaboration aimed at increasing access to affordable, healthy food. Rose Caiola, an American Heart Association NYC Board member, helped fund the creation the food access program in Morris Heights and funds a sister farmstand in the Norwood neighborhood.

"I'm thrilled beyond words that we're able to bring healthy, affordable food to this amazing community," said Caiola, who is the founder of Rewire Me and Principal Member of Bettina Equities Management.



Monica Tomlinson Francois (L). Photos courtesy of GrowNYC.org

“Having the farmstand here in Morris Heights, in the Bronx, means increasing access for the community, and helping local farmers throughout the region so they can be economically supported and preserve farm land,” said Angela Davis, Director of Food Access & Agriculture, GrowNYC. “We’re really happy to be working with all the various partners in the Bronx to make this borough a healthy place to live, eat, work and play.”

Mari G. Millet, President & CEO of Morris Heights Health Center, discussed the importance of the community coming together with a shared goal of increased health access.

“It’s all about access to healthy lifestyles and access to healthy eating,” Millet said, “We talk about how important it is to get people healthy, but where do they go? We are happy to say they can come to this farmstand and to Morris Heights, where we make everything available to them to create better lives.”

Millet talked about the power of partnership in the effort to remove the Bronx from the bottom of the list when it comes to health outcomes in New York State, and how working together with community leaders and nonprofit organizations like the American Heart Association makes it possible to

deliver to the many communities in the Bronx that need our help. “We all have the same vision and mission, and that is to improve the lifestyles and health of our communities,” Millet said.

“It’s incredible to see so many organizations and individuals committed to make lasting change here in the Bronx,” said Meg Gilmartin, Executive Director, Senior Vice President, American Heart Association, New York City. “We at the American Heart Association are privileged to have the support of donors like Rose Caiola, who have ties to this community. It is our honor to be able to take their desire to make an impact, focus their commitment and see that come to life here in Morris Heights, and in Norwood. This is a great success for all of us!”

**“IT SHOULD NOT MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE; BEING ABLE TO FIND AFFORDABLE, HEALTHY FOOD IS AN ESSENTIAL HUMAN RIGHT.”**

- Rose Caiola  
Board Member, American Heart Association  
Founder, Rewire Me

# FULL-CIRCLE MOMENT

## A RESEARCHER WHO GOT HIS START WITH HELP FROM THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION LEAVES A LEGACY

Peter Abbrecht, a prolific and esteemed researcher, got his start in part due to an unexpected American Heart Association award. "When I was in engineering school, I had taken a course in biotechnology, and the professor there was a mentor and said, 'You should consider going to medical school,'" Peter said.

"One of the dramatic things I learned was I had the opportunity to do research, but I needed to make money to keep going to medical school. The American Heart Association gave me a fellowship and award, which really enabled me to get a start in medical research."

The award is one of the reasons, he said, "I feel very strongly about supporting the American Heart Association." That award would later lead to Peter's illustrious career that included publishing more than 100 scientific papers, working as a professor and chairman in medical schools and testifying as an expert witness for 20 years.

He retired in 2000 and began a second career as a medical expert and scientist-investigator for the U.S. Office of Research Integrity. After almost 20 years of investigating allegations of fraud in medical research and trials, Peter finally fully retired in 2018 at the age of 87.

Even with an array of career accomplishments, Peter says the highest point in his life "by far was December of 2000 when I married my wife, Dianna." His love for her further fuels his passion to give back.

"Once I made sure my Dianna would be provided for in my estate plan, we looked at a bunch of different ways of supporting charities."



*Peter with wife Dianna. Photos courtesy of Peter Abbrecht.*

"I have a significant amount of money in IRAs. If I pass all of it to Dianna, she will end up having to take these large required minimum distributions, which would shoot her up into an unnecessarily high tax bracket." Instead, Peter arranged for his IRA to go to the American Heart Association to fund a Charitable Remainder Unitrust that will pay his two children an income for life.

A **Charitable Remainder Unitrust (CRUT)** has significant tax advantages and can provide a donor or their beneficiaries with a steady, fixed amount of income each year, regardless of the performance of the trust. This can be done for a specified length of time up to 20 years, a lifetime or beneficiaries' lifetime. When the contract ends, the remaining funds can be used by the Association in our efforts to battle heart diseases and stroke.

**"IT'S A VERY WORTHY CAUSE, AND ALSO A WAY TO MAKE A GIFT THAT IS MEANINGFUL."**

**- Peter Abbrecht**



# GET GROWING

THESE HERBS AND VEGGIES ARE PERFECT STARTER PROJECTS FOR BEGINNERS.



**Cucumbers** – A favorite to throw into green drinks for an energy boost in the morning or tasty salads, cucumbers are extremely versatile. After planting your seeds, be sure to give them good fertilization and they will love you back with plenty to eat.

**Tomatoes** – This simple to grow plant will leave you shocked at how much better right-off-the-vine tomatoes taste compared to your grocery store picks. For a quicker start-up, head to your local flower store and pick some already sprouted tomato plants in the pot.

**Radishes** – These little flavor-bombs are an awesome addition to salads. Plant your radish seeds and you only have to wait about 3 weeks to see results.

**Basil** – Basil is such a versatile herb. Make sure this plant is well watered and has lots of sun. Instead of spending \$2 per bunch every week at the store, spend that in your garden and have plenty of basil for months.

**Cilantro** – How can you make a Mexican dish without this flavorful herb?! Plant these seeds early in the year for optimal growth.

**Parsley** – This versatile herb is also a staple in green juices. Packed with vitamins A and C it is more than just a garnish. Parsley loves good soil and sunlight.

**Berries** – These are slightly trickier, but worth the extra effort. Growing your own berries (especially the expensive ones like raspberries) will save you so much money it's unbelievable!

These tips have been adapted from a blog post on Heart.org written by American Heart Association volunteer Devin Alexander, author and former Chef for NBC's *Biggest Loser*.





American Heart Association®

**100**

**YEARS**

**Bold Hearts**



American  
Heart  
Association®

National Center  
7272 Greenville Avenue  
Dallas, TX 75231

## 5 REASONS TO ADD **COLOR** TO YOUR DIET

### **1.** Lots of the Good

Fruits and vegetables provide many beneficial nutrients. Add fruits and vegetables to meals and snacks for a nutritional power boost.



### **2.**

### Less of the Bad

Fruits and vegetables are typically free of trans fat, saturated fat and sodium. Load up!

### **3.** Won't Weigh You Down

Fruits and vegetables are low in calories. They fill you up thanks to the fiber and water they contain, which can help manage your weight.



### **4.** Super Flexible Super Foods

All forms of fruits and vegetables — fresh, frozen, canned and dried — can be part of a healthy diet. They are among the most versatile, convenient and affordable foods you can eat. Choose those with little or no added salt or sugar.



### **5.**

### A Whole Body Health Boost

A healthy eating plan full of fruits and vegetables can help lower your risk of many serious and chronic health conditions, including heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes and some types of cancer. They're also essential to your everyday health.