

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 18, 2011



Contact: Wendy King
American Heart Association
317-732-4706 (office) ; 317-506-2126 (mobile)

wendy.king@heart.org

Follow on www.twitter.com/WendyLKing

THREE CHILDREN FOCUS ON RHYTHM OF THEIR HEARTS

Fort Wayne Heart Ball helps fund research and educational programs that fight heart disease in children

(Fort Wayne, IN) – The rhythm of your heart. Most people take it for granted. But for Aiden Eastom, Brady Dowell and Madeline Cumbey, heart beats take on a very important role every day of their lives.

- **Aiden, 8**, (Fort Wayne) was born with congenital heart defects including a cleft mitral valve. He underwent heart surgery at 19-months-old and takes daily medication that has stabilized his condition, but his heart could worsen as he gets older. His parents hope is that that someday technology will advance so that any future procedures he needs would be minor or less invasive than having another heart surgery.
- **Brady, 15**, (Orland, Ind.) was diagnosed with the most severe case of Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome – he had no left ventricle to his heart. Having undergone three open heart surgeries, Brady needs a heart transplant, but isn't a candidate due to his other conditions. His future is uncertain. His parents hope that the answer will come from ongoing research funded by the American Heart Association.
- **Madeline, 10**, (Fort Wayne) has made it her personal mission to educate kids about their risk of heart disease due to obesity and inactivity. Madeline serves on the national Youth Advisory Board for the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. She has a family history of high blood pressure & heart disease. Both of her grandfathers had heart attacks by age 55. Her mantra is "it can be different for me if I live healthier."

The three children will speak to the more than 300 guests at the American Heart Association's 2011 Heart Ball on Feb. 25 at the Fort Wayne Country Club. The fundraiser for the American Heart Association is more important than ever. Consider this:

- Congenital heart defects are the most common birth defect and are the number one cause of non-accidental death during the first year of life.
- Each year, about 40,000 babies are born with heart defects.
- For the first time in history, children's life spans are predicted to be less than their parents' because of inactivity and obesity related illness.
- Nearly one in three overweight or obese kids under the age of 18 faces the threat of early heart disease because of their weight. Being overweight or obese as a child or teen can translate into premature heart disease, lower quality of life as an adult and a shorter lifespan.

The Heart Ball offers guests the opportunity to support a special campaign, the *Learn and Live Special Appeal*, which addresses the critical issue of children's heart health.

-more-

The American Heart Association funds research that addresses congenital heart defects, childhood obesity and diabetes. Additionally, it funds programs to help kids learn about nutrition, exercise and how to live healthier lives. Research funded by the American Heart Association has produced pacemakers, cholesterol lowering drugs, innovative and noninvasive ways to perform heart surgery.

Heart disease kills more people in the U.S. than the next four causes of death combined.

The Heart Ball is a major fund-raising event benefiting research, public education and community programs of the American Heart Association and its mission-related activities in Allen County. For information about the Heart Ball or how you can support the American Heart Association, call 260-485-9890 or visit www.heart.org/fortwayne.

###

About the American Heart Association

The American Heart Association is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary health organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. Our mission is to build healthier lives by preventing, treating and defeating these diseases – America's No. 1 and No. 3 killers. We fund cutting-edge research, conduct lifesaving public and professional educational programs, and advocate to protect public health. To learn more or join us in helping all Americans, call 1-800-AHA-USA1 or visit americanheart.org.