From the president…

The winter season creates a lot of changes in the weather and also in us. We experience a feeling of isolation, it gets dark earlier, we cannot get out and we have difficulty staying warm. All of this coupled with the COVID-19 issues can lead us to depression. It seems that depression can increase the risk of other heart and health issues. This week offered one of my favorite winter scenes, although short lived, snow on the crepe myrtles and rooftops in my neighborhood. There is something refreshing and relaxing about sitting and watching the snow flurries floating to the ground.

As we begin 2021, our hope that a COVID vaccine would be developed has materialized and now we wait for our category group to get the vaccine. I miss seeing my family and friends and visiting our patients at the hospital. Until then, continue to stay heart healthy and take care of yourself according to COVID guidelines.

Membership in Mended Hearts—Join today for only $20 and no local dues.

Effective January 1, 2021, Mended Hearts, Inc has made several changes with shipping charges and membership.

1) Shipping charges for HeartGuides provided to patients we visit in the hospital will be paid by the Resource Center.

2) The Resource Center will process all new memberships and renewal memberships.

3) 25% of all paid national dues will be given to chapters and groups, and

4) Chapter dues and group dues are eliminated.

So, join Mended Hearts today or renew your membership for $20 national dues and our chapter receives $5.00 back. So, NO LOCAL DUES. We look forward to a successful 2021.
In memory of Tom Smith

Mended Hearts 260 extends our deepest sympathy to the family of Tom Smith who passed on December 31st. Tom was the husband of Donnette Smith, our former chapter president and Chapter 260 founder. Tom was also a Mended Hearts member and a member of Huntsville Hospital Auxiliary. We all knew Tom as the quiet one who loved playing golf, especially with his granddaughter Hannah and providing a place for any dog who needed a home.

Tom was precise in logging each patient visited in Huntsville Hospital. At the end of the year, our annual report for Mended Hearts was always ready for us to file. He was timely and accurate with the number of patients visited, their correct addresses for both the monthly postal newsletter mailings as well as the electronic email addresses for patients. He often joked with me that “you guys need to improve your handwriting, I can’t read this”. But on most months, few were returned for incorrect addresses and almost no email addresses were rejected. He will certainly be missed and his position as patient update will certainly be a loss for our chapter. Our prayers are with Donnette and the family that they find courage to face the days ahead and loving memories of Tom to forever hold in their hearts.

Celebrate the new year with one-day projects

Maybe instead of making a long-term new year’s resolution ("I will save money all year!")], you could try doing one satisfying thing.

Clean up your computer: Start with photos. You probably have a lot of them from the last year and this is a great way to reminisce while usefully deleting the junk. You can rename photos to make them searchable. If you are feeling organized, make some coherent groups for them.

Closet: All those clothes that don’t fit. If you do lose weight, you won’t want to wear them anyway.

Kitchen: Seriously how many crockpots and coffee cups do you need?

Garage: Can you ever find a tool?

Finally, throw away, recycle, donate

Here are some ideas to stay active, physically and mentally, during these peak winter months:

Chair yoga classes, tai chi or resistance band exercises. Lots of options out there and all free if you use YouTube.

Join an online book club. Any number of book clubs are open, from Oprah's Book Club to one hosted by NFL quarterback Andrew Luck (appropriately named "Andrew Luck Book Club") and one from the AARP called The Girlfriend Book Club, with more than 14,000 members. Search "online book club" to find more. Join a real-life book club.
How to face the flu and common cold

This year it's more important than ever to get your flu shot. In a normal flu season, heart patients are at a greater risk of developing serious complications from the flu. This year, with COVID-19 putting people with underlying health conditions at risk, heart patients and caregivers of those with congenital heart defects (CHDs), need to be even more vigilant when it comes to protecting their health and the health of their loved ones.

Precisely what is the dreaded "Flu"? It's an acute respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses A or B. While most people who get the flu recover in a week or two, others can develop severe and potentially life-threatening complications. According to the Mayo Clinic, those most threatened are children under five and adults older than 65, nursing home and long-term care residents, pregnant women up to two weeks postpartum, and others with weakened immune systems. So too are people with chronic illnesses or who are extremely obese.

If the flu strikes, stay home. You're sick and highly contagious. Embrace your downtime and heal your body with it. Curl up on the couch, read, watch TV, and nod off to sleep anytime. Get between seven and nine hours of sleep every night--your body is fighting a virus. Drink plenty of fluids for both the flu or a cold. Fluids hydrate your respiratory system and convert thick mucus into a liquid you can spit out. An expectorant will thin the mucus, too. For congestion, the Mayo Clinic recommends over-the-counter decongestant tablets like Sudafed and nasal sprays. Studies suggest they narrow blood vessels in the lining of the nose and help reduce swelling.

Beware flu and COVID complications

Influenza has taken a back seat in headlines this year, but experts recommend that you get a flu shot nonetheless, including for a reason you might not be aware of -- your heart. The Mayo Clinic says complications from the flu are more likely in people with heart disease. The Centers for Disease Control reviewed cases of 80,000 people diagnosed with the flu from 2010 to 2018. Of those, nearly 12 percent had a serious cardiovascular problem. The study was published in August. According to Harvard Medical School, the body's immune response against the infection can trigger inflammation and other changes that harm the cardiovascular system. And because just 30 percent of people with the flu develop a fever, the infection can go unnoticed. The flu shot can help prevent infections and also reduce the risk of developing severe complications when infections do occur. COVID plus flu One unpleasant scenario: It is possible to get COVID-19 and the flu at the same time — a catastrophic and possibly lethal combination. Symptoms of both are much the same, but many COVID-19 patients report a loss of taste or smell.

A flu shot helps to avoid this double whammy.
We recognize member birthdays and surgery dates referred to as Mendiversaries. Congratulations to everyone who is celebrating a heart procedure anniversary this month. If we have your month listed incorrectly or you would prefer not to be listed, please notify the chapter president. If we are missing your celebration, let me know at 256.837.7354.

December Birthdays
James Carter
Emma Mamo
Jan Petersen

January Birthdays
Sherrill Altice
John Neely
John Phillips
Fredonia Williams
Lincoln Williams
Jim Wright

December Mendiversaries
Eddie Landers
Harriett Littlepage
Arthur Nunes
Pete Petersen

January Mendiversaries
Robert Allen
James Foreman
Carl Walker

Mended Hearts Mission Statement: “To inspire hope and improve the quality of life of heart patients and their families through on-going peer-to-peer support, education, and advocacy.”

Mended Hearts
Vision Statement: “To be the premier nationwide resource and peer-to-peer support network for all heart patients and families affected by Heart Disease across the life span.”

About Mended Hearts: “Mended Hearts is a national and community-based non-profit organization that has been offering the gift of hope to heart disease patients, their families and caregivers. To offer this hope Mended Hearts provides a variety of programs.”

One Sunday morning, a pastor noticed little Alex standing in the foyer of the church staring up at a large plaque. It was covered with names and small American flags mounted on either side of it. The six-year-old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside the little boy and said quietly, “Good morning, Alex.” “Good morning, Pastor,” he replied, still focused on the plaque. “Pastor, what is this?” The pastor replied, “Well, son, it's a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the service.”

They just stood together quietly, staring at the large plaque. Finally, little Alex’s voice, barely audible and trembling with fear asked, “Which service, the 8:00 or the 9:30?”
Is It Time to Renew Your Mended Hearts Membership or join us???
(both national and Chapter 260)

Membership in Mended Hearts and Mended Little Hearts now is about how you can help improve the lives of heart patients and their families, beginning with your own. We are now offering a free membership level. This was created so that money will not be a barrier to engaging with Mended Hearts and Mended Little Hearts and receiving access to resources and information.

When you join at this level, you become part of something bigger, and you help us give voice to the many issues heart patients face throughout their lifespan. You also learn about the many educational opportunities Mended Hearts and Mended Little Hearts provide. Finally, you join the nation’s largest cardiovascular disease peer-to-peer support network and help us support even more people. Mended Hearts and Mended Little Hearts provide educational programs, peer-to-peer support programs, heart disease awareness campaigns, and we advocate for heart patients big and small every opportunity we can. We need your support to do this. To join Mended Hearts or Mended Little Hearts or renew your membership is easy and can be done online or through the mail.

To renew over the phone, please call 888-432-7899 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET. To renew through the mail, print off and fill out the membership form found in this newsletter. It can be mailed to the address for the Mended Hearts Resource Center found on the form.

We have a variety of levels of membership for both individuals and families. Please review the attached membership form for the membership levels. We appreciate the response from last month’s request for joining and/or renewing your membership, so we are including the information in the rest of the 2020 newsletter issues. We really would like to see an increase in both our local chapter as well as the national chapter. An increase in membership is an increase in the number of individuals made aware of the benefits of being involved with Mended Hearts.

Mended Hearts is a national and community-based non-profit organization that has been offering the gift of hope to heart disease patients, their families and caregivers. To offer this hope Mended Hearts provides a variety of programs.

- Mended Hearts is the largest peer-to-peer heart patient support network in the world
- Mended Hearts has been offering hope and support for 69 years, providing more than 230,000 visits each year
- Mended Hearts provides education, support and hope to all types of heart patients and their families
- Mended Hearts and Mended Little Hearts has 265 chapters in North America, serving 460+ hospitals

It’s great to be alive and to help others.

*Please note, as of January 1, 2021, no local dues for chapters. See page 1 for more information on joining Mended Hearts. For more information, call me at 256.837.7354.*
Effective January 1, 2021, the Resource Center will process all new memberships (all levels) and all membership renewals.

All chapters will be reimbursed 25% of all paid national dues or renewals of dues.