February is American Heart Month. American Heart Month is important because it reminds us to take care of our heart, promotes education about heart health, and raises awareness of heart.

As patients, caregivers, relatives, and friends of those who have heart disease we are aware of some of the complications that are involved. A large part of our mission at Mended Hearts is to reach out and encourage those who are experiencing heart disease. However, as we are nearing the end of two years of the pandemic, we are still having to deal with cases of covid. The hospital has allowed us to begin visiting the heart patients if we follow all the guidelines that they have established. I have begun visiting on every Tuesday. I average seeing 10 patients a week, but there are those that are missed because they have been admitted and discharged between those days.

If you would like to help heart patients face their future with heart disease, this is a very rewarding experience. We need accredited visitors to reach as many patients as possible. We have some volunteers who are now sewing the heart pillows to be given to the patients. I want to thank the volunteers, Julie Algie, Ashley Smith, and April Gough who have been diligently working to keep me supplied with pillows to give to the patients. It is amazing how much they appreciate these pillows.

Dr. Fredonia Williams is our Accredited Visitor Chairperson. If you are interested in becoming an Accredited Visitor, please contact her @ 256-837-7354 and she can give you information on what is necessary to become an accredited visitor. Also, you can find out about Accredited Visitors on the Mended Hearts website at https://mendedhearts.org/accredited-visiting/.

Lindell Smith, President
Join us for our February 17th Chapter 260 Mended Hearts Zoom Meeting for a great program, “Sharing Your Heart”. The Share Your Heart theme is another opportunity for us to share our story with others. We are encouraging each of you to be a part of this exciting opportunity to offer support and encouragement to others but also to receive encouragement from each other. We have missed this opportunity during COVID as we have not scheduled in person meetings.

If you are interested in becoming a virtual visitor for our chapter or you are an in-person visitor who needs to be reaccredited, contact me at 256.837.7354. Our chapter will need to add more accredited visitors when we have a full return to patient visiting.

If you are a member interested in supporting heart patients and families virtually through our National My Heart Visitor program, also contact me and we will put you in touch with the trainer.
Mended Hearts® has been supporting patients for 71 years, but has revolutionized the way they support valve disease patients over the past two years. Join us to learn why peer support is so vital and how lives are being changed by hearing “You are not alone”.

Andrea Baer, MS, BCPA, Executive Director of The Mended Hearts, Inc., will be joined by Mended Hearts® Peer Supporters to talk about how you can GIVE and GET Support!

Heart Failure

Your heart is a pump. It moves blood and oxygen-rich nutrients through your body. If you have heart failure, your heart isn't pumping as well as it should. As a result, fluid can build up in the body—most often in the legs and lungs.

Your heart also isn’t able to push enough blood to meet your body's needs for blood and oxygen. It’s no wonder then that if you have heart failure, you may tire more easily and feel short of breath.

What causes heart failure?

The most common causes of heart failure include high blood pressure, heart attack and coronary artery disease. But other conditions and factors can lead to heart failure as well.

Many people who have heart failure will have:

- Shortness of breath (even when doing simple tasks like dressing or walking a flight of stairs)
- Swelling in the ankles, feet, legs, abdomen, or veins in the neck
- Extreme tiredness (fatigue)
- Feelings of weakness
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Fast weight gain, or rapid fluctuations in weight
- Pressure or heaviness in the chest when lying flat
**Cold weather and the impact on your heart**

Whether you live in a frigid climate or not, cold weather can affect your heart. According to the American Heart Association, cold weather and other seasonal factors can raise the risk of heart attacks and more.

Studies show that cardiac deaths begin to climb around Thanksgiving, peak early in the year, then decrease as warmer weather returns. According to a 2015 study by Dr. Robert A. Kloner of the Huntington Medical Research Institute, every one degree Celsius drop in temperature (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) corresponded to a 0.49 percent increase in deaths from all causes.

Kloner said many factors are at work. The cold makes arteries constrict, which can decrease blood flow and the delivery of oxygen; it also tends to increase the formation of blood clots. Winter is also flu season, and studies have shown an increase in heart attacks shortly after people get the flu.

Some other potential factors include: the stress of holidays; a lack of sunshine and an increase in depression; and less exercise in the colder, darker months.

For those with coronary conditions, it's especially important to be aware of cold-weather activities like shoveling snow -- consider hiring someone to do it or using a snowblower, particularly if you're not in shape -- and to dress warmly. And of course, eat a healthy diet.

**Broken hearts are a real medical issue**

Sad, the doctors say a broken heart can actually be an illness. According to Harvard Medical School, broken-heart syndrome, also called takotsubo cardiomyopathy, was first identified several decades ago in Japan. Although rarely diagnosed, it is most commonly seen in older women.

Patients experience a dramatic stressor in their lives (death, violence, or fear). The event causes a surge in hormones such as adrenaline. These hormones can stun the heart and lead to irregularities of the heart's proper functions. The left ventricle in the heart weakens and balloons outward in a strange shape that looks like a Japanese octopus trap (a tako-tsubo). When a patient has this feature and no blocks in the coronary arteries, doctors can distinguish the disorder from a heart attack.

For the patient, it feels like a heart attack with chest pain and shortness of breath.

Medical professionals thought for many years that takotsubo sufferers could recover in about a month without any long-term repercussions but recent research published in the Journal of the American Society of Echocardiography has shown that it can have an impact for years after the initial event. These patients exhibited lingering signs that were very similar to those found in people with chronic heart failure - a condition that involves heart muscle death and does not currently have a reliable cure.
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.

February Birthdays
Karen Cloe
Angela Griffin
Bob McCall
Maureen Nix
Barbara Turner
Laura Mickler Walker

February Mendiversaries
Steve Burcham
Logan Cox
Patricia Doty
Helen Drake
Rebecca Grimes
Bill Oliver

Hope you’re feeling better!
Barbara Morris
Donnette Smith

Schedule a visit. You can schedule a telephone visit or a video chat visit with a trained volunteer who is a heart patient, caregiver, or a parent of a child with a heart condition just like you. To speak to someone right now, please call our toll-free number: HEARTLINE at 1-844-HEART87 (1-844-432-7887) The Visiting Center is open between 10AM and 6PM Eastern Monday through Friday and Noon to 3:00PM Eastern on Saturday. If you do not get someone, please leave a message and we will get back to you.

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.”

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.”

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.”
Renew Your Mended Hearts Membership or join us
National dues individual $20; family $40
No local dues as chapter receives 25% of national dues paid

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. 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.