Super Big Issue

Woman's Day

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50 Snacks Under 100 Calories
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“15 Minutes That Saved My Life”

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FEBRUARY 14, 2006 U.S. $2.79 CANADA $3.79
Celebrate with Karen Duffy these women who have lived heart disease. Then get on a red dress for Wear Red Day for Women, February 3, to call attention to American women's number-one health threat.

Karen Duffy, 43
NEW YORK, NY
Karen Duffy is having some fun at her own expense, recalling a recent incident at a New York City restaurant. "This woman was looking at me, not like she recognized me from TV, but like she knew me," Karen says. "She comes over finally and says, 'I know you from the gym.' My husband looks at me, astonished, and says, 'You go to the gym?'"

This irreverence, and the fact that she's recognizable from her days as an MTV veejay, Revlon spokesmodel and actress (Dumb and Dumber, Reality Bites), makes "Duff" a popular spokeswoman for the American Heart Association's Wear Red Day for Women campaign. "My grandmother died of heart disease," Karen says. "And after my own illness [sarcoidosis, a neurological disease], I wanted to do something to let women know they have some control over their health destiny. For her own heart health, Karen is striving to make those gym visits more productive. "I finally realized that when I'm on the stationary bike reading my magazines, I've got to pedal, too."

Paint the Town Red
Photographs by Luigi Ciuffetelli
I had never even heard of a silent heart attack, let alone suspected that I'd had one.

Carol Duggan, 58
Manchester, CT

Carol Duggan had double-bypass surgery two years ago, after a strange sensation in her chest sent her to the hospital. "At the hospital they told me I'd actually had a heart attack the week before with no symptoms, what they call a 'silent' heart attack," Carol recalls. "Then, while I was still in the hospital recovering, I experienced arrhythmia." At that point doctors implanted a pacemaker. "I felt like I would never get my life back, that I would never be healthy again."

Lessons learned
Lifestyle changes are tough, as Carol found out when she returned home. She had to take it easy at work for months, and she also started making changes to her diet. "I cut out fried and fatty foods—all the stuff that's high in fat and cholesterol—out of necessity, but I feel so much better now," Carol says. "I want women who are out there and going through the same thing I did to know that their life's not over."

Dress, Thalia, $24.99; gold pumps, Tracy Reese, $519; earrings, $39, and pearl bracelets, $55 each, all Tina Yang
Diane Palmer, 46
New York, NY

Doctors diagnosed bacterial endocarditis, an infection of the heart's inner lining, when then 20-year-old dance student Diane finally went to the hospital because of her racing heart. "It had gotten so bad that I'd sweat through my pajamas two or three times a night," Diane says. "The doctors said my mitral valve was damaged, probably from a case of strep throat I'd had earlier." She began taking medication and was able to continue dancing, but seven years later the valve finally gave out and she had to have open-heart surgery to repair it. "I never expected to be having open-heart surgery at 28," Diane says. **Lessons learned**

As the picture at right proves, Diane is in stunning shape. "I'll do 30 to 40 minutes of cardio three times a week, usually warming up with a jump rope, then on to the stationary bike and treadmill," she says. "It's essential for my health, plus it just makes me feel good."

I was a healthy 20-year-old on a dance scholarship when I first started noticing my heart racing."
jessica melore, 24
BRANCHBURG, NJ

Jessica Melore was waiting for a lifesaving heart transplant while most girls her age were dreaming about going to the prom. "I was 16 when I had a heart attack as a result of a blood clot," Jessica says. To complicate matters, during the surgery to remove the clot, a balloon pump cut off circulation to her left leg, and as a result her leg had to be amputated. She had a multiple bypass and a heartmate implant to help pump blood to the left side of her failing heart. "I went back to school six weeks later, and then right before graduation, I got the best news ever: A donor heart came through."

lessons learned
"People always say, 'Wow, you’ve been through so much for someone so young.' But I don’t think of myself as a martyr or anything. Your life is your life, and what you make of it is up to you. The donor made it possible for me to have a life," says the Princeton University graduate, who now works for the New Jersey Sharing Network, a nonprofit organ donation group. To learn more about Jess, visit her website at jessicamelore.com.

I have an obligation to let people know how important organ donation is.

Red Dress Pin
Show your support for the American Heart Association when you buy our Red Dress Pin. All profits go to the AHA. One pin (no. 1338A) is $7.95, or get some for your friends and save: Buy five pins (no. 1338B) for $29.95 or 10 pins (no. 1338C) for $59.95. Call toll-free 800-866-6662 and ask for Dept. C095N or go to shop.womansday.com.

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I'm not the only one this has happened to. It's what's known as the silent epidemic.”

audrey kunin, 46
KANSAS CITY, MO

Her 2002 heart attack couldn't have surprised Audrey Kunin, M.D., more. "I'm a doctor, so I thought I would certainly know if I was having a heart attack," says the dermatologist and founder of the DermaDoctor line of skincare products. "It started with severe burning pain in my back along my braline. I ignored it because I didn't have time to get sick." But when the burning turned into the crushing chest pains more typically associated with a heart attack, she went to the hospital. Doctors now think a genetic predisposition for forming coronary plaque in the arteries caused her heart attack.

lessons learned
"I thought I was completely healthy," Audrey says. "I didn't have any of the obvious risk factors—high cholesterol, diabetes, high blood pressure. I'm not a smoker or overweight. I'm physically fit. I'd had a physical exam six months earlier, and my total cholesterol was 101! But if I'd had an MRI or a stress test, doctors would have seen the blockage. That's why I think we need to come up with a way to improve screening for women. Say, at 44 age, a woman should have an MRI angiogram or a nuclear stress test and get a baseline reading of her heart health."

To find out the numbers that determine your heart disease risk, learn how your purchases can make a difference and organize your own Red Dress campaign at work, log on to goredforwomen.org.

Woman's Day has teamed up with sister magazine Elle to bring you even more beautiful red dresses. Visit womansday.com/redress to see them all.