



Lighting the Way: Heart-Healthy Torch run promotes awareness

By **Mary Jo Shafer**/newburyport@cnc.com

Newburyport Current

Posted Feb 26, 2010 @ 01:41 PM

Last update Mar 01, 2010 @ 09:19 AM

Newburyport —

They carry the torch to fight a killer. Over the last two weeks, the Heart-Healthy Torch has been making the rounds of seven area communities. The goal of the torch run, sponsored by Anna Jaques Hospital and the Tannery Marketplace, is to raise awareness of heart disease, the number one killer of men and women.

Teams of runners affiliated with the Tannery and the hospital have been carrying the torch throughout the area. The torch run began Feb. 1 at the Tannery in Newburyport and has made its way through Newbury, West Newbury, Georgetown, Salisbury and Amesbury. The torch will wind up its journey Saturday, Feb. 27, back at the Tannery.

City officials in the towns have made an event of the torch's arrival and departure. Newburyport Mayor Donna Holaday kicked off the run Feb. 13, declaring it "Heart Healthy Day," in the city.

The run is done with the spirit of the winter Olympics in mind, in honor of February's designation as Heart Disease Awareness Month and with the mission of raising awareness and highlighting the simple steps that can prevent heart disease.

"The winter Olympics athletes were inspiration," said Jennifer Karin, public relations and community outreach director at Anna Jaques. "They embrace that everyday."

These simple preventative steps: "being healthy, eating right, don't smoke, get physical," are a key part of the battle against heart disease, she said.

"You don't have to worry about making monumental changes right away," she said. "You can walk 10 minutes extra everyday and it will benefit your heart. Add one serving of fruit a day and it will benefit your heart."

The reception in the seven communities has been fantastic, said Karin. "Because heart disease is the number one killer of men and women, everyone has a story about it; it's amazing when you are out in the community ...the message is definitely getting out there."

The runners have had a blast, she said. "They've been carrying [the torch] nice and high, and they say even the garbage men have been honking when they go by."

Shaping up to benefit self, charity

Dr. Sunny Srivastava often sees the effects of heart disease. A cardiologist with Pentucket Medical Associates, he commonly prescribes that patients "embark upon exercise."

Spreading awareness of heart disease and the importance of exercise is putting into practice what he often preaches as a doctor. "What better way than to get out there myself and get some exposure and visibility to it," he said.

Srivastava is in the midst of training for the Boston Marathon, so he doesn't consider the 5-mile stretch he'll run Friday between Salisbury and Amesbury to be a problem.

Achieving physical fitness plays a tremendous role in staying healthy, he said. Exercise and weight control help keep blood pressure and cholesterol under control and fight diabetes.

"The benefits are far-reaching and more than just the numbers," he said, adding that exercise helps improve mood, reduce stress and increase energy.

The torch run will culminate Saturday with the kickoff of the Lace Up and Shape Up Challenge sponsored by the Tannery. The challenge is "a fun combination of incentives for exercising, participating with others in that endeavor, just sort of making a difference in your life, makin a genuine improvement," said David Hall, co-owner of the Tannery Marketplace.

He said the Heart-Healthy Torch run coincided with plans to launch the community-wide fitness incentive.

"So the two dovetailed really well, because the torch campaign is all about heart health," he said. "We tailored our program to be a good

follow-up to the heart health awareness effort.”

Participants in the challenge can sign up by the giant shoe at the Tannery. You’ll get some bright orange shoelaces and a bracelet, and you’ll be able to choose a charity that will benefit from your exercise program.

Participants record their progress and send it to the challenge. Individuals can participate as well as businesses.

“The more you exercise, the more charity points accrue towards [your charity],” said Hall. Full details of the challenge are available at: tannerymarketplace.com/laceupshapeup/

Taking part in the torch run and launching the fitness challenge highlight the importance of exercise, he said.

Hall said he hopes to loop in municipal offices, police and fire departments in the seven surrounding communities. They might even want to engage in some friendly competition.

“It can really get fun,” he said.

Heart Disease Facts and Figures

- At least 80 million people in this country have some form of cardiovascular disease.
- More than 2,400 Americans die of cardiovascular disease each day, an average of one death every 37 seconds.
- Cardiovascular disease is the cause of more deaths than the next five causes of death combined, which are cancer, chronic lower respiratory diseases, accidents, diabetes mellitus and flu/pneumonia.
- It is a myth that heart disease is a man’s disease. In fact, cardiovascular diseases are the number one killer of women (and men). These diseases currently claim the lives of nearly a half a million females every year.
- About one-third of cardiovascular disease deaths occurred prematurely (before age 75, the approximate average life expectancy).

Source: American Heart Association

FYI:

The Heart-Healthy Torch: ajh.org

Lace Up and Shape Up Challenge: tannerymarketplace.com/laceupshapeup/

Comments (0)

Login or register to post a comment:

Login

Username:

Password:

[Forgot password](#)

Login

Register

Email:

First Name:

Last Name:

I agree to the terms of use

I am over 13 years of age

NOTE: Your inbox must accept emails from "no-reply@gatehousemedia.com"

[Register](#)