



As a leading advocate for women's heart health and wellness, the Women's Heart Foundation (WHF) experienced substantial interest from both the private and public sector in the past year. Women are becoming increasingly motivated to seek out relevant information about the risk of cardiovascular disease, and more critically, have access to a growing body of scientific literature that points to the physiological differences between men and women. Gender is a factor in the diagnosis and treatment of the disease and the Women's Heart Foundation espouses the importance of understanding the difference.

The media has become an instrument of change and it has been responsive to the message being disseminated by this organization and other advocacy groups that heart disease in women manifests itself far differently than men.

Capitalizing on this unprecedented time for women's health, the charity designed a new logo, profiling the figure of a woman inside of her heart. The design was created by Executive Director Bonnie Arkus and introduced September 25, 2002 at the NIH launch of the government's HEART TRUTH campaign in Washington, DC. WHF was named a partner in this national endeavor to raise awareness about women's heart disease. So successful was the reaction, that the WHF has begun trademark proceedings for the new logo.

### Outreach

- In FY 2002-2003, WHF partnered with the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick for its 9th annual signature event— Women's Heart Week.
- For the first time, it designated February 1 as National Women's Heart Wellness Day since the WHF is the first non-profit organization in the country to initiate public education about women's heart disease for National Heart Month. It created a special website, [www.womensheartweek.org](http://www.womensheartweek.org) to announce the event and list its sponsors. The event took place at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. More than 1,600 women from across New Jersey were involved in many activities that embraced a common theme of risk factor reduction. The day ended with women taking the microphone giving testament to the fact that they were not aware that heart disease is the #1 killer of American women, pledging to make lifestyle changes and to follow-up with their doctors about symptoms. The week included a medical conference on gender bias, co-sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School at UMDNJ, with keynote Mehmet Oz, MD of Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center. WHF contracted with Kathrine Switzer to be its spokeswoman to promote women and walking and to make a celebrity appearance February 1. Ms. Switzer is a marathon runner and the author of "Running and Walking for Women Over Forty — the Road to Sanity and Vanity". Ms. Switzer is credited with opening the floodgates for women and sports, having fought her way to become the first woman athlete to compete in the Boston Marathon.
- WHF partnered with Welch's to produce a national public service message advocating for women's health and the health benefits of purple grape juice. This audio CD was packaged by Welch's and sent to various radio stations around the country and, within a few short weeks, far exceeded expectations. Over 42 million people heard the message nationally.
- Web statistics tell us that WHF's main website receives about 5,000 hits a day and is visited by leading medical institutions around the country. WHF's popular "Ask The Nurse" page has been temporarily closed until a new nurse clinician can be located to address women's emailed concerns.
- WHF participated for the second year in a row at the NBC Philadelphia Fitfest, conducting blood pressure screenings on 350 inner city women and completing heart disease risk assessments on women.
- WHF again exhibited at the National Council for Patient Instruction and Education (NCPIE) convention held in Washington, DC. WHF's program— *Medication Safety: Facts, Fiction and Fundamentals* —is the only one of its kind in the country. WHF developed 7 focus days to begin a Medication Safety Week April 1-7 and would like to launch this effort after exploring partnerships.

### Advocacy

WHF's heart health message continues to be promoted by the media and demand for its programs continues to grow. The organization restructured its bylaws to prepare for expansion so that more women may benefit. Its Purple Ribbon campaign is becoming more widely recognized as a symbol to raise awareness about women's heart disease. The organization has been approached by other groups to partner with it nationally. More and more hospitals are incorporating gender care messages into their marketing messages with a menu of holistic health options to offer inpatients either as alternative to or in combination with traditional medicine.

### Future

WHF is the only organization that has defined a women's wellness model. The organization is challenged to provide for the public at low cost while faced with the need for administrative growth. While WHF receives generous support for implementation of programs, funding the organization's operational and overhead costs has become increasingly difficult and locating new health partners for women's heart health in the community is essential.