

# Upcoming women's tea is health focused

## By Kassandra Shanette Lockhart

The color red and hearts are synonymous with the month of February. There is a focus on love, the power of it and the joy of experiencing it. In addition to love, there is also a focus on the heart as it relates to health.

The second month of the year is American Heart Month. It was started in 1963 to encourage Americans to join the fight against heart disease, the leading cause of death for men and women. Across the country hospitals, health systems, organizations and fitness clubs sponsor programs and events that raise awareness about the dangers of heart disease through speakers, handouts and exercise sessions.

Along with the groups mentioned previously, many churches also play a vital role in distributing information. Here in Davidson County, one local church is targeting women when it comes to their heart healthiness.

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the women of Centenary United Methodist Church will host it's second annual "Go Red for Women Tea" from 2:00pm-4:00pm at the church. The goal of their program is to educate women in the community about heart disease.

Started in 2004 by the American Heart Association, the Go Red for Women initiative was activated to charge women to take control of their heart health. According to the Center for Disease Control, heart disease is the third leading cause of death among women ages 25 to 44.

These facts are some of the leading reasons Centenary has decided to tackle the issue directly. According to Carolyn Howell, program coordinator, information is key.

"So many women aren't diagnosed early," said Howell, a retired health educator. "Or when they come in with symptoms, a lot of times doctors don't check for the possibility of heart disease. In the past, it was typically known as a man's disease. Now they're finding out more and more women have it. Unless you're persistent with talking to your doctor, they're not really thinking about heart disease and they pass it off as something else."

There are many components that play a role in the education of heart disease. At last year's tea, the focus was on providing information about what heart disease looks like. The featured speaker explained risk factors, symptoms and the role your family history plays in your heart health.

This year's program will focus on healthy eating and exercise. The theme is "Recipe for Healthy Living."

"A lot of times, the things we grew up eating tend to be the things we eat as adults," Howell said. "We need to look at some of things – what have I been eating and what can I do differently. You could say I need to eat differently. I need to eat healthier. A lot of chronic diseases are related to diet and lack of exercise. Those are two key things we can do something about."

Sharing knowledge at the event this year will be Amanda Yakos, a Dietician with Forsyth Medical Center and Samantha Cook and Kathleen Gerber from the Jerry Long YMCA. All three will present material that will be applicable to attendees upon departure.

While many may not typically turn to the church, first, when there is a need to spread information, Howell believes the church is an ideal place for an event such as this due to its roots in fellowship and service.

“We have an audience and a large group of people,” she said. “You can reach a lot of people at one time.”

Howell also sees another added benefit of having the tea at a location where you know people will show up.

“The more people we reach, we ask them to take the information they’ve learned into the community,” she said. “When they’re talking to their family and friends, they can share it with them. This is something we all need to be aware of.”

While heart disease and the facts surrounding it will be at the center of conversation, the tea will also feature fun, learning, light refreshments and door prizes.

For Howell and the committee (Beth Clark, Kathy Howell and Darlene Gardner), they believe it’s important that what is shared with them is shared with others. This aids in reducing the amount people affected by the disease.

“We want to bring those numbers down.”

The tea is a free event and open to the community. However, registration is required. Those interested in attending are asked to call the church at (336)766-5987 and leave a message with your name, phone number and the number of attendees. RSVP by February 20. The church is located at 5280 Hampton Road in Clemmons.

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