



American
Heart
Association.

INNOVATE. IMAGINE.
INSPIRE.

AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL VOLUNTEER AWARDS

OCTOBER 27, 2020

#AwardsWithHeart

OUR MISSION

To be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.

EMCEE

Carey Peña, Founder & CEO, Inspired Media 360

HOSTS

Bertram L. Scott, Chairman of the Board
Dr. Mitchell S.V. Elkind, AHA President
Nancy Brown, Chief Executive Officer

AWARDS

- Distinguished National Leadership Award** Dr. Robert A. Harrington
- Louis B. Russell Jr. Memorial Award** LAPD Harvard Park Community Safety Partnership Team
Tore Laerdal
- Ron Haddock International Impact Award** Christine P. Gustafson
- Morgan Stark Memorial Award** Midge LaPorte Epstein
Mike Bolen
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Tom Greco
- Earl B. Beagle Award for Staff Excellence** Dr. Paul A. Heidenreich
Dr. William T. Mahle
- Award of Meritorious Achievement** Lynn Hundley, MSN
Dr. Paul J. Mather
Dr. Mark A. Creager
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- AHA Physician of the Year**
- Gold Heart Award**

DISTINGUISHED NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD



Robert A. Harrington
M.D., FAHA

AHA President, 2019-20

Arthur L. Bloomfield
Professor of Medicine
Chairman, Department of Medicine
Stanford University

Presented annually to outgoing officers of the American Heart Association.

By his seventh year overseeing the Duke Clinical Research Institute, Dr. Robert Harrington had grown it into the world's largest academic research organization. He felt things were running smoothly enough that he could take on another big role: a two-year stint as the top organizer for AHA Scientific Sessions.

Soon, Stanford University School of Medicine lured him west as chair of its Department of Medicine.

He found a way to make everything work for everyone — so well that he followed his Sessions role with two terms on the AHA Board of Directors and a year as president-elect. Then, last summer, he became the 83rd president.

During his Presidential Address, Bob repeatedly said “evidence matters,” a phrase he linked to the fight against heart disease and stroke.

Then came March and the coronavirus. At Stanford, he sprang into action to manage COVID surge planning, shut down non-essential projects, ramp up COVID-related research and do his part to ensure the safety of students, residents and fellows. At the same time, he contributed his voice as the AHA released credible, current scientific information to the clinical community and the public.

His leadership and dedication to the AHA during an unprecedented period will long be cherished. His fingerprints are most evident on the funding of \$2.5 million in Rapid Research Grants for fast-tracked studies of the effects of COVID-19 on the heart and brain.

To his credit, the AHA also allocated nearly \$17 million to scientists leading the End Nicotine Addiction in Children and Teens (ENACT) research initiative.

On the equity front, the AHA Social Impact Fund invested \$4 million in 33 organizations breaking down barriers to healthy living across Boston, New York City, Chicago, Flint, Michigan; San Francisco and Oakland, California. In turn, that funding inspired an additional \$15.9 million from other investors. Likewise, the Bernard J. Tyson Impact Fund has raised multimillions of dollars.

This is just a sampling of what Bob led — all while serving on the Executive Committee of the AHA Institute for Precision Cardiovascular Medicine, co-chairing the Research Leaders Academy Planning Committee and chairing the Silicon Valley Heart Ball.

“I’ll always remember how dedicated people are to the AHA mission — from the science community to the lay public,” he said.

“I’ll always remember how dedicated people are to the AHA mission — from the science community to the lay public.”

I’m a relentless force for...

innovation, mentorship, collaboration and equity.

What gives me hope is...

the amazing selflessness of friends and colleagues.

LOUIS B. RUSSELL JR.

MEMORIAL AWARD



Los Angeles Police Department

Harvard Park Community Safety
Partnership Team

He was an AHA volunteer and the 34th person to undergo a heart transplant, surviving more than six years — a world record in the 1970s. Louis B. Russell Jr., a Black teacher from Indianapolis who passed away in 1974, is the namesake for this annual award that honors outstanding service to communities of color and under-resourced populations.

For years, drug dealing and shootings at Jackie Tatum Harvard Park in South Los Angeles scattered fearful residents.

But it's a refuge today, with a swimming pool, tennis courts, auditorium and other amenities. The turnaround began in 2017, when the Los Angeles Police Department's 77th division started a community safety partnership program with the LA Department of Recreation and Parks and others in the community.

Later that year, the 77th division teamed up with the American Heart Association and the LA Department of Recreation and Parks to start Community S.T.E.P.S. — Strategic Dialogue That's Empowered by Public Safety.

In addition to slowly earning the community's trust, "we were able to drop crime, violence and gangs by 80% to 90%," said Sgt. Clement Toscano, who leads the program.

One of 110 submissions for AHA CEO Nancy Brown's "Culture of Health Community Innovation Challenge," S.T.E.P.S. won \$100,000 to

implement a community health initiative that could be replicated in other cities.

As a part of S.T.E.P.S., the officers and the AHA lead a bi-weekly community walk through the park. The kickoff event attracted more than 700 people and included a 40-yard race, tennis clinic and an "Adopt a Cop" tent where residents asked officers questions.

Subsequent events have included group bike rides, a nighttime walk illuminated by glow sticks, holiday celebrations, skate jams, produce giveaways, cooking demonstrations and free health screenings.

"We try to be very active and teach people about eating healthy food," said Officer V. De La Torre, who teamed with the AHA and the Girl Scouts to start a local chapter.

"We can never take away the negative things they have seen, but we encourage them to vent and learn," Clement said.

"We can never take away the negative things they have seen, but we encourage them to vent and learn."

We are a relentless force for...

building strong community relationships and earning the community's trust.

What gives us hope is...

the relationships we have built with residents, and the trust we have with them. The children can live a better future and will strive to help others.

RON HADDOCK

INTERNATIONAL IMPACT AWARD



Tore Laerdal

Chief Executive Officer
Laerdal Medical

Named in honor of Ron Haddock, the 2012-13 chairman of the American Heart Association, the International Impact Award recognizes an individual or group for outstanding contributions to our global efforts.

When he was 2, Tore Laerdal's father found him face-down in water, unconscious and cold. This near-death accident in 1954 had a profound influence on his family and became the catalyst for his lifetime of service as an adult.

The event also motivated his father, Asmund S. Laerdal, then a toy manufacturer, to start producing the first lifelike manikins for resuscitation training.

"The experience of very nearly losing me had a strong impact on him," Tore said. "It changed the course of the company. My father was determined to make a difference. I was inspired by him."

That inspiration continues today as Tore serves as CEO for the company his father started, now called Laerdal Medical, based in Stavanger, Norway.

He is the executive director of the Laerdal Foundation, which has funded 2,000 research projects in acute medicine and global health. Another

initiative, Laerdal Global Health, is a nonprofit he established to provide affordable and culturally sensitive training to help reduce maternal and newborn deaths.

In 2005, Laerdal Medical became the first American Heart Association Board Approved Strategic Alliance. Through this partnership, more than 12 million students have used specialized self-training stations to improve their skills in basic and advanced cardiac life support.

Other alliance projects include Hands-Only CPR training kiosks in nearly 30 U.S. airports, development of CPR Anytime kits, HeartCode eSimulation courses and expansion of the Resuscitation Quality Improvement (RQI) program.

"I'm proud of the work my father started," Tore said. "I work every day to continue his legacy for the next generation."

"I'm proud of the work my father started. I work every day to continue his legacy for the next generation."

I'm a relentless force for...

helping prevent needless deaths resulting from sudden cardiac arrest, trauma or childbirth.

What gives me hope is...

in spite of the challenges we still face, the death tolls from sudden cardiac death and among mothers and babies at birth have come down significantly in most countries over the past two to three decades.

MORGAN STARK MEMORIAL AWARD



Christine P. Gustafson

Senior Vice President
Wealth Management
UBS Financial Services, Inc.

This annual award — whose namesake was a highly respected investor, financier, philanthropist and friend to the American Heart Association — honors an individual for outstanding stewardship of Association resources and leadership in human resources, finances or operations.

Combining her passion for numbers and her dedication to heart health, Christine Gustafson has helped improve the balance sheet of the American Heart Association over the past decade.

“To help provide financial peace of mind for an organization that is doing groundbreaking work like the AHA is personally rewarding,” said Christine, a longstanding member of the investment committee and a volunteer for the annual Phoenix Heart Ball.

Born with a heart abnormality and having lost her grandparents and several other family members to heart disease, she takes the AHA mission personally. Her involvement began in the early 1990s when a friend invited her to serve on the Phoenix Heart Ball committee.

In 2003, she chaired the committee, which raised \$1.8 million for the AHA.

“There is no other organization in this country doing more for women

than the AHA,” she said. “That’s been a very robust message, and it resonates.”

“There is no other organization in this country doing more for women than the AHA.”

Shortly after the so-called Great Recession, in 2010, Christine joined the AHA’s investment committee and later served a three-year term as chair. She advocated for diversifying the committee to better reflect the population the AHA serves and implementing an investment strategy that improved returns and eased concerns over assets.

She was instrumental in converting a portion of the AHA’s stock holdings into cash, locking in \$35 million in gains over the past three years. The funds have helped the AHA weather the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting turbulence in the financial markets.

“I’m thrilled to be able to work with some of the best and brightest people I’ve ever known,” she said. “And my work with Heart Ball has led me to some of my dearest friends.”

I’m a relentless force for...

guiding the AHA to be the best steward of its assets and find financial peace of mind.

What gives me hope is...

the cutting-edge research which the AHA funds and the breakthroughs that come from these projects.

EARL B. BEAGLE AWARD

for Staff Excellence



Midge LaPorte Epstein

Executive Vice President
Strategic Planning &
Management Consulting
American Heart Association

The American Heart Association's highest staff honor is presented to an employee who exemplifies leadership, professionalism, dedication and performance excellence.

Early in Midge Epstein's 25-year career with the American Heart Association, a Louisiana volunteer approached her with a dilemma.

She'd been asked to chair the AHA Advocacy Coordinating Committee and, though she was excited, she feared that — with no policy background — she was unqualified.

"I told her, 'They believe you have the ability to rise. It's an opportunity. Seize it.'"

That volunteer, Coletta Barrett, would chair the advocacy committee for three years, win awards and become the first nurse administrator to serve as national chairman of the board.

"I love surrounding myself with talented people — staff and volunteers — and creating pathways for them to achieve more than they thought possible," Midge said.

It's her "why."

When you ask Midge what she's most proud of, it's not shattering records and setting new standards across five affiliates and national. It's not growing annual field campaign revenue from \$33 million to \$63 million in 10

years as executive vice president of the SouthWest region. Nor is it about the nearly \$1 billion in revenue she has raised over the years.

What moves Midge are the people inspired and the lives improved through investments in the mission.

She invested in creating a local advocacy team that became a national model and led efforts to make CPR training a graduation requirement in five states, expand pulse oximetry testing and pass smoke-free ordinances in over 100 Texas cities.

Her team on the Caruth Grant initiative transformed North Texas heart attack care. Likewise, Mission: Lifeline-Wyoming reduced mortality in the state.

In her current role, she's worked with the national Board of Directors to develop the 2024 Impact Goal and with AHA staff leaders to set revenue and brand objectives. She has also been a leading voice for health equity through her work on the Social Determinants of Health Task Force in 2017 and other initiatives in subsequent years.

And as we come together to address social injustices that threaten health and well-being, she says: "I don't know how my voice will be used. But doing nothing is not an option. To whom much is given, much is required."

"I love surrounding myself with talented people — staff and volunteers — and creating pathways for them to achieve more than they thought possible"

I'm a relentless force for...

racial justice and lifelong learning.

What gives me hope is...

faith in God and in people who are willing to act to create a just world.

AWARD OF MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT



Mike Bolen

Chairman
McCarthy Building Companies

Since 1952, the American Heart Association annually bestows the Award of Meritorious Achievement on individuals or organizations for a specific accomplishment or project that supports our national programs.

Since he was a kid growing up in Phoenix, Mike Bolen has loved building things.

First, toy blocks. Then, mobile radar (electronic surveillance) sites in the Air Force after the Vietnam War. And now, multimillion-dollar hospital projects as chairman of McCarthy Building Companies.

"My dad and uncles were carpenters, so it's all I've known all my life," said Mike, who joined the 155-year-old company in 1981 as a carpenter superintendent.

According to the American Heart Association, 1 in 25 construction workers has cardiovascular disease, 1 in 4 is obese, 1 in 4 uses tobacco and 1 in 25 has diabetes.

"It's a serious situation in our industry," said Mike, who created Hard Hats with Heart, which promotes CPR education for construction workers and provides companies free resources to improve employee health.

Founded in 2009, the initiative now spans 17 markets and raises millions of dollars to fund heart and stroke research, health consumer education and community outreach.

COVID-19 "calls us all together to support each other, fight back, and not allow fear to win."

I'm a relentless force for...

making a difference and seeing the positive results of my efforts.

"Last year, Orange County marked \$10 million raised since the program's inception," he said. "But it's not just about Orange County — it's six major cities across the country all competing with each other under the McCarthy banner."

Mike attributes local success, in part, to longtime \$100,000-level sponsor Sasco Electric.

But the real secret sauce is his leadership by example.

McCarthy Building Companies is a Platinum-level Fit-Friendly Worksite — AHA recognition for helping employees embrace wellness at work and at home. Since 2004, Orange County employees have raised more than \$1.2 million for Heart Walk and the corporation has sponsored over \$2.9 million.

"This year's fundraiser will look a little different, but we are no less hopeful," he said. "Everyone and every institution has been blindsided by COVID-19. It calls us all together to support each other, fight back, and not allow the fear to win."

What gives me hope is...

the ability and willingness of people to come together as a team in response to COVID-19. ICU nurses give me hope and confidence we will defeat this thing.

AWARD OF MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT



Mary Cushman
M.D., FAHA

Professor of Medicine
Larner College of Medicine
University of Vermont

Since 1952, the American Heart Association annually bestows the Award of Meritorious Achievement on individuals or organizations for a specific accomplishment or project that supports our national programs.

Over the last three decades, Dr. Mary Cushman has emerged as a national leader in cardiovascular health. But the journey hasn't been easy — she's had to overcome more obstacles than most of her male counterparts.

"I've learned we're not gender blind," said Mary, a hematologist and professor of medicine and pathology at the University of Vermont. "It's nobody's fault. Unconscious biases are just baked into you.

"But as we create a pipeline of future leaders, we have to make sure women in science overcome these biases and have every possible opportunity to grow their careers."

Mary has worked on dozens of AHA committees, co-authored countless papers and won a case full of awards. She has also made far-reaching contributions on the local, regional and national levels, serving as chair of council operations and as a national board director.

Currently, she is chair of the Go Red for Women in Science and Medicine Task Force, where she pilots programs to help women better understand their risk for heart disease.

"Volunteering with the AHA has been one of the best parts of my career," she said. "It helped me develop my skills as a scientist, grow as a leader and connect with other people who share my passion."

Her significant work in gender and racial diversity for the AHA and the University of Vermont's Larner College of Medicine is changing the dialogue and making an impact. As a pioneer for AHA early-career development programs, she has set up programs that guide, counsel and inspire the next generation of scientific leaders.

"It's gratifying to see early-career professionals who want to be involved and want to feel like they're part of something larger," she said.

"It's gratifying to see so many early-career professionals who want to be involved and want to feel like they're part of something larger."

I'm a relentless force for...

solving disparities and inequities affecting health in non-majority groups.

What gives me hope is...

the power of people working together to affect change.

AWARD OF MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT



Tom Greco

Chief Executive Officer
Advance Auto Parts

Since 1952, the American Heart Association annually bestows the Award of Meritorious Achievement on individuals or organizations for a specific accomplishment or project that supports our national programs.

When Advance Auto Parts CEO Tom Greco showed up at one of his company's stores recently, an employee greeted him by unbuttoning his shirt to reveal a surgical scar from his clavicle to his belly button.

"This is a great cause!" the man said, referring to the American Heart Association's Life Is Why We Give fundraising campaign, which Tom invites his customers at more than 5,900 Advance Auto Parts and independently owned Carquest stores nationwide to support.

In addition to chairing the Triangle Heart Walk in North Carolina in 2018 and 2019, Tom encourages Advance Auto Parts employees to learn Hands-Only CPR.

"Heart disease is the No. 1 killer across the globe and it really impacts our 70,000 employees," he said. "Working with the AHA helps us make a difference for our work family and in our communities."

Focusing on health is a family tradition for Tom, whose Italian immigrant grandmother laid down the law for her 10 children.

"She told my uncle, 'You're going to be a dentist.' She told my father, 'You're going to be a doctor.' And my eight aunts all became nurses."

Even though Tom didn't follow his family's footsteps into medicine, he does whatever he can to improve public health.

Asking his employees to learn Hands-Only CPR "is probably the single biggest thing we can do to build a generation of lifesavers," Tom said.

More than 356,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur each year in the U.S., and nearly 90% of them are fatal, according to the AHA.

"If we can get more people to learn Hands-Only CPR, we can definitely reduce those rates," he said.

Asking employees to learn Hands-Only CPR "is probably the single biggest thing we can do to build a generation of lifesavers."

I'm a relentless force for...

putting people first.

What gives me hope is...

our team members across Advance Auto Parts continue to support each other and do everything they can to keep the country moving and our people and customers safe.

AWARD OF MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT



Paul A. Heidenreich
M.D., FAHA

Professor of Medicine
Professor of Health Research
and Policy
Stanford University

Since 1952, the American Heart Association annually bestows the Award of Meritorious Achievement on individuals or organizations for a specific accomplishment or project that supports our national programs.

First jobs often involve flipping hamburgers, bagging groceries or taking tickets at a movie theater.

Dr. Paul Heidenreich landed his first job as a hospital phlebotomist — drawing blood from patients and asking cardiologists to explain how to insert a catheter into a heart.

He was 16.

"I was fortunate to get that early experience where I could see the combination of scientific rigor and the ability to benefit others," he said.

A cardiologist, policy adviser and one of the country's leading researchers on the economics of heart disease, Paul said he wouldn't be where he is today if it weren't for enlightened mentors who steered him in the right direction. As a student at the University of Chicago, he learned from Dr. Steven Feinstein, a cardiologist with "an incredible passion for doing whatever it took to advance the science of his field."

Later, while working at the San Francisco VA Medical Center, he collaborated with Dr. Warren Browner, who inspired him to think deeply about off-the-beaten-path topics such as the cost-effectiveness of health care.

"I think artificial intelligence would allow physicians to take care of patients more efficiently and quickly and improve the quality of care."

In 2013, his devotion to improving health services led him to chair the AHA policy statement, "Forecasting the Impact of Heart Failure in the United States," which has been cited more than 1,000 times.

He's chaired the AHA Council on Quality of Care and Outcomes Research, the Steering Committee of the Get With the Guidelines program and the American College of Cardiology/AHA Task Force on Performance Measurement. He's also held ACC/AHA leadership positions in committees on atrial fibrillation and cost/value methodology.

In recent years, Paul has studied new ways economic modeling can more accurately predict health care costs. He is particularly interested in innovations that allow doctors to use computer-assisted analysis of imaging and other medical data.

He also wants to research new ways to use artificial intelligence to catch undetected disease or identify illnesses early on — sometimes before patients even know they have a problem.

"I don't ever see artificial intelligence as replacing physicians," he said. "But I do think it would allow physicians to take care of patients more efficiently and quickly and improve the quality of care."

I'm a relentless force for...

improving length and quality of life for patients with heart disease.

What gives me hope is...

the vast number of individuals willing to dedicate their time, money and careers to improving health.

AWARD OF MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT



William T. Mahle
M.D., FAHA

Marcus Professor of Pediatric Cardiology
Division Director of Cardiology
Emory University School of Medicine
and Sibley Heart Center Cardiology

Co-chief, Children's Healthcare
Atlanta Heart Center

Since 1952, the American Heart Association annually bestows the Award of Meritorious Achievement on individuals or organizations for a specific accomplishment or project that supports our national programs.

Dr. William Mahle was just five years into his career as a pediatric cardiologist when he heard another pediatrician's baby had died after a missed diagnosis.

Bill didn't know the doctor or the baby, but he was especially shaken because the tragedy was avoidable.

"It was a completely reparable lesion," he said.

That incident further sparked his passion to save as many babies as possible through congenital heart screenings. Through his research, advocacy and other work, Bill has done just that.

He is the Marcus Professor of Pediatric Cardiology and division director of cardiology in the Department of Pediatrics at Emory University School of Medicine and Sibley Heart Center Cardiology in Atlanta. He is also co-chief of the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Heart Center.

His passion shines through in his nearly 20 years as an AHA volunteer. First, he joined the Council on Cardiovascular Disease in the Young — now the Council on Lifelong Congenital Heart Disease and Heart Health

in the Young (Young Hearts) — because the group needed an early-career representative.

He was lead author of a Young Hearts 2006 statement that supported creating a formal nationwide screening program to identify neonates with critical congenital heart disease. In 2009, he led the writing group that published a statement summarizing evidence to support a screening program.

In the ensuing years, he spearheaded collaboration among public health experts, patients and families, and governmental agencies to develop a screening plan.

Now newborns get a pulse oximetry screening as part of their routine evaluation.

Besides exemplary leadership as chair and co-chair of Young Hearts, Bill was co-founder and co-chair of the Early Career Mentoring Committee and a member of the National Research Committee.

"The AHA is a powerful organization in a good way, making it possible for big things to happen," he said.

"The AHA is a powerful organization in a good way, making it possible for big things to happen."

I'm a relentless force for...

harnessing the commitment and passion of AHA volunteers to meaningfully improve the lives of children.

What gives me hope is...

health care and medical science are noble and meaningful professions, which attract the strengths and passion of the younger generation.

HEALTHCARE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



Lynn Hundley
MSN, APRN, CNRN, CCNS,
ANVP-BC, FAHA

Director, Clinical Effectiveness
for Stroke Care
Norton Healthcare

The Healthcare Volunteer of the Year Award celebrates outstanding contributions to our achievements in cardiovascular diseases or stroke patient care, or improvements in the delivery of healthcare. The recipient is a healthcare professional or lay administrator, as well as a volunteer at the division, affiliate or national level.

Lynn Hundley's father tried to steer her toward business and economics, but she knew she was cut out for science and medicine.

When her dad died from heart disease when she was 20 years old and just starting nursing school, it impacted her deeply.

"Having lost him at such a young age continues to fuel my passion to decrease the burden of cardiovascular disease," said Lynn, who is now director of clinical effectiveness for stroke care at Norton Healthcare in Louisville, Kentucky.

She gets to see the impact of her work at the annual survivors' dinner she founded at her hospital, though it had to be canceled this year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Not every stroke has a positive outcome — but holding on to the happy endings helps you go on," she said.

In addition to her work at Norton Healthcare, Lynn serves on a steering committee of the Kentucky Stroke Systems of Care group, providing education and tools to hospitals throughout the state.

The group — a collaboration of the American Heart Association, the Kentucky Department of Public Health and several hospitals in northern Kentucky — shares the newest advances, best practices and scientific guidelines for stroke care.

Lynn began volunteering with the AHA more than a decade ago, implementing Get With the Guidelines-Stroke in her hospital. She loves being an AHA volunteer because it allows her to work with people who share her passion.

But the best part is being able to make tangible progress and know she's made a difference.

"It shouldn't matter who you are or where you are, you should be able to get the best stroke care," she said.

"It shouldn't matter who you are or where you are, you should be able to get the best stroke care."

I'm a relentless force for...

leveling the playing field for stroke care.

What gives me hope is...

we are making a difference, and it is such a great feeling to have been part of that.

AHA PHYSICIAN OF THE YEAR



Paul J. Mather
M.D., FAHA

Professor of Clinical Medicine
Division of Cardiovascular Medicine
University of Pennsylvania
Perelman School of Medicine

This award is presented annually to a practicing physician who has rendered outstanding contributions to fulfill the American Heart Association's mission.

Some people might rest on their laurels after helping get a citywide sugary beverage tax passed that led to sweeping health improvements.

Not Dr. Paul Mather.

For one thing, the Philadelphia cardiologist remains vigilant about the beverage industry's efforts to overturn the three-year-old tax, which research suggests cut adults' monthly soda consumption by 31% and children's daily sugar intake by 22%.

For another, he spearheaded an effort at a West Philadelphia church to address social determinants of health — conditions where people live, learn, work and play that affect their health risks and outcomes.

He is also seeing patients, many of whom have heart failure or have received a heart transplant that makes them particularly susceptible to complications if they contract COVID-19.

He first volunteered with the AHA because he was grateful the organization had funded his research as a young investigator in 1993. He also believed in the AHA's public health mission.

Everyone is shaped by their upbringing and their environment,

according to Paul, who was twice president of the AHA's regional boards of directors.

"To me it's important to give back to the community and to be cognizant of the needs of the community," he said.

At Victory Christian Church in West Philadelphia, one of the city's high-poverty areas, Paul worked with other health care professionals who checked local residents' blood pressure and taught them about diabetes, nutrition, exercise and yoga. The church even established a farmer's market to promote healthier eating.

The coronavirus crisis has brought to light racial and ethnic health inequities, he said, noting that Blacks, Hispanics and others have been disproportionately affected. He's hopeful that the pandemic will spur people to rethink what it means to be human and a member of a community.

"I think we are obligated to make each other's lives as good as possible," Paul said. "Nothing can make our lives or the lives of other people more beautiful than perpetual kindness."

"To me it's important to give back to the community and to be cognizant of the needs of the community."

I'm a relentless force for...

acknowledging and addressing disproportionate suffering.

What gives me hope is...

watching millions of selfless people who are putting the needs of others ahead of themselves. There is but one solution to the intricate riddle of life: to improve ourselves and contribute to the happiness of others.

GOLD HEART AWARD



Mark A. Creager
M.D., FAHA

AHA President, 2015-16

Director, Heart and Vascular Center
Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center

Professor of Medicine, Professor of Surgery
Dartmouth College, Geisel School of
Medicine

Presented annually to extraordinary volunteers whose contributions of time and talent have transformed communities and advanced our mission nationally, the Gold Heart Award is the American Heart Association's highest volunteer honor.

Forty-six years after he graduated from the Temple University School of Medicine, renowned vascular specialist Dr. Mark Creager still approaches each day with the enthusiasm of a student.

"I wake up in the morning and look forward to the day's opportunities. I love what I do," he said.

His distinguished career includes pioneering the Heart and Vascular Center at Dartmouth in 2015, leading vascular initiatives at Brigham and Women's Hospital for 31 years prior and advancing medical understanding of atherosclerotic vascular disease through research.

As an American Heart Association volunteer for over three decades — including a term as president in 2015-16 — he revolutionized the research enterprise and embedded peripheral vascular diseases into its construct.

His path to the AHA took shape in the final stretch of his residency at University Hospital — predecessor to Boston University Medical Center — and Boston City Hospital next door. For a year, he supported Dr. Jay Coffman's research on how a digitalis-like drug affected peripheral vascular function.

That opportunity led to another as a cardiology fellow under chief of cardiology Dr. Thomas J. Ryan, a former AHA president.

I'm a relentless force for...

reducing the prevalence of atherosclerosis, the leading cause of heart and vascular disease in the world.

"I wake up in the morning and look forward to the day's opportunities. I love what I do."

Both men shepherded Mark and inspired his service to the AHA — a tradition that runs deep at the hospital, which produced four AHA presidents including Tom, Dr. David Faxon, Dr. Alice Jacobs and Mark.

After his fellowship, Mark stayed on staff for another five years before moving to Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Fast forward to 2005, when AHA leadership formed the Peripheral Vascular Disease Inter-Disciplinary Working Group (now the Council on Peripheral Vascular Disease) and reached out to Mark to chair the group.

He went on to chair the Atherosclerotic Peripheral Vascular Disease Symposium II in 2008 and the National Research Committee in 2011-13. In 2012, he co-chaired the AHA Research Summit, which produced the bold vision known as the 12 Essential Elements of Research.

His transformative leadership made him a natural choice for president and, serendipitously, his Presidential Address coincided with announcement of the AHA's One Brave Idea Science Innovation Center in Boston.

Today, he remains passionate about research during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I am optimistic that we will have a vaccine to reduce contagion, and targeted therapies to address the downstream effects," he said.

What gives me hope is...

the breadth of research being performed to tackle COVID-19, including research funded by the AHA.



#AwardsWithHeart

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