



# Innovators at Heart

A publication for those who support heart-related research, education, and care at the University of Minnesota

## Ask about aspirin

*A new public health campaign aims to educate Minnesotans about the benefits of low-dose aspirin*

Behold the power of the media: When the U.S. Department of Transportation introduced us to Crash Test Dummies (remember them? "You could learn a lot from a dummy") in 1985, only 14 percent of Americans used seat belts. Today, that number hovers around 79 percent. Experts recognized that seat belts were the most effective protection against serious injury and death in car accidents, and they set out to educate the American people about buckling up.

On a similar note, experts at the University of Minnesota's Lillehei Heart Institute and the School of Public Health have developed a program to spread the word about steps Minnesotans can take to prevent a first heart attack or stroke. To start, the program will highlight the benefits of taking low-dose aspirin daily.

Called "Partners in Prevention," the pilot program rolled out in Hibbing—chosen because of a tradition of teamwork on behalf of its citizens—earlier this year.

*Photo by Jim Bovin*



Karen Miller, M.S.W., M.P.A., and Alan Hirsch, M.D., kicked off a statewide effort to prevent heart attacks and strokes in Hibbing earlier this year.

**By the numbers:  
The truth about  
heart disease**  
**page 2**

Patient reflects on his  
leading-edge surgery  
60 years ago  
**page 3**

Singer helps to raise  
nearly \$690,000 at  
Red Hot Soirée  
**page 4**

"Why should any Minnesotan, or American, suffer a preventable heart attack or stroke?" asks Alan T. Hirsch, M.D., director of this new initiative and the University's vascular medicine program. "Traditionally, the health system is focused only on reacting to the emergency of the disease. This campaign is all about prevention."

*continued on page 2*

## Ask about aspirin *(continued from cover)*

The science on aspirin is clear, says Hirsch. "It's incontrovertibly true that when used correctly, daily low-dose aspirin can help reduce the number of heart attacks and strokes suffered by both men and women."

Research shows, however, that fewer than 30 percent of Minnesotans in the target group—men ages 45 to 79 and women ages 55 to 79—actually take aspirin daily.

Increase that number by even 10 percent, believes Hirsch, and more citizens would stay healthy—and the state would realize millions in health-care cost savings as the number of people hospitalized by strokes and heart attacks decreased.

Since the goal of the Partners in Prevention project is to promote a major cultural change, the program has saturated Hibbing with media messages—using billboards, social media outlets, newspapers, newsletters, brochures, radio spots, and websites—urging older residents to ask a health-care professional about whether they should take daily aspirin to help prevent cardiovascular disease.

Health worker education is another critical component of the program. As Hirsch points out, doctors now routinely ask women in annual wellness visits if they've had a mammogram or ask older adults if they have had a colonoscopy. "But has your doctor ever discussed aspirin use or other heart health measures with you at those visits?" he asks. "Most likely not."

Karen Miller, M.S.W., M.P.A., the associate director of Partners in Prevention, explains that this program tackles that problem directly, looking for ways to integrate the aspirin question into the health-care workflow.

"We're trying to reach people in all areas," she says, "including those who don't go to doctors routinely. It's as comprehensive an effort as we can make it."

While the pilot program in Hibbing is scheduled to end in September, Hirsch hopes to expand Partners in Prevention throughout the state over the next two years—pending additional funding, which his team is actively seeking.

"We can work together to roll back the epidemic of disability we've created in the last half century and prevent heart disease," he says. "Once this message is considered central to community health, we hope that Minnesota will become an example to the nation."

### The truth about heart disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States.



Heart disease was the cause of nearly 25 percent of all deaths in the country in 2008.



Approximately 144,000 Minnesotans have coronary heart disease.



In 2009 alone, Minnesotans incurred more than \$1.79 billion in charges for hospitalizations due to heart disease.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Minnesota Department of Health



# *Sixty years after open-heart surgery, a patient is still grateful for pioneering care*

In 1952, Eisenhower became president, Hasbro introduced Mr. Potato Head, gas cost 20 cents a gallon, and, at the University of Minnesota, doctors performed one of the world's first successful open-heart surgeries.

Jay Pearson was just 4 years old when he was admitted to the University's Variety Club Children's Heart Hospital on March 28, 1952, for one of those early open-heart surgeries. His memories of the time are vague: white-clad nurses wearing big, winged hats; glass bottles clinking on IV poles; syringes being sterilized in the flames of alcohol burners.

What he doesn't remember is the procedure—a repair of coarctation of the aorta complicated by bacterial endocarditis—performed by pioneering surgeons C. Walton Lillehei, M.D., Ph.D., and Richard L. Varco, M.D., Ph.D., who went on to establish the University as a world leader in cardiac surgery.

Pearson, hale and hearty now in his 60s, was pronounced asymptomatic in 1956, and he spent his childhood running around like other boys, his heart pumping along just fine. He did

stand out in one aspect, though: He has a scar that runs from chest to back, "almost like they cut me in half!"

"Other kids were always asking to see the scar," laughs Pearson. "I was quite the attraction. Recently somebody on the beach in Florida asked me if my scars were from a shark attack."

In 1994, University doctors asked Pearson to undergo a battery of tests as part of a follow-up program on very early heart patients. They decided he should see a cardiologist regularly; he now sees James Moller, M.D., and Cindy Martin, M.D., at the University's Adult Congenital and Cardiovascular Genetics Clinic as well as Stephen Battista, M.D., at University of Minnesota Physicians Heart at Fairview. But he's had no further surgeries.

"I was too little to appreciate what happened," says Pearson, "that I was one of the first open-heart surgery patients. But it's amazing, isn't it, that Lillehei was figuring this stuff out right when I needed him?"



*Photo by Jim Bovin*

*The surgeons who performed Jay Pearson's open-heart surgery in 1952 went on to establish the University as a world leader in the field.*

## **A gift to the Lillehei Heart Institute, lifetime income for you**

Support heart health research at the University of Minnesota and receive steady income for life with a charitable gift annuity. Through a simple contract, you agree to make a donation of cash, stocks, or other assets to the Minnesota Medical Foundation. In return, we agree to pay you a fixed amount each year for the rest of your life.

In addition to providing future support for the University's important work and receiving lifetime fixed payments, a charitable gift annuity offers additional benefits:

- Your gift is partially tax-deductible.

- Your gift payments are partially tax-free throughout your estimated life expectancy.
- Your payments are fixed—unaffected by ups and downs in the economy.
- The gift annuity can be for one or two people, so your spouse or another loved one can also receive payments for life.
- If you use appreciated stock to make your gift, you can eliminate capital gains tax on a portion of the gift and typically can spread the rest of the gain over your life expectancy.

*To receive a personalized example illustrating how a charitable gift annuity can work for you, contact Jennifer White of the Minnesota Medical Foundation at 612-625-8676 or [jewhite@mmf.umn.edu](mailto:jewhite@mmf.umn.edu).*

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

**Minnesota Medical Foundation**  
McNamara Alumni Center  
200 Oak Street SE, Suite 300  
Minneapolis, MN 55455-2030

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
TWIN CITIES, MN  
PERMIT NO. 90155

## Manilow headlines the 'hottest party in town'



(Above) Robin Maturi and her baby, Avery, greet Kenneth Liao, M.D., Ph.D., the heart surgeon who helped to save both of their lives, at the Red Hot Soirée.



Music superstar Barry Manilow thrilled the nearly 800 guests of this year's Red Hot Soirée, a gala benefit for the Lillehei Heart Institute at the University of Minnesota. The event, held April 14 at the Depot in Minneapolis, raised almost \$690,000 for heart health research and education at the University.

Manilow, who experiences an irregular heartbeat and whose personal cardiologist was trained at the University, generously donated his performance once he learned of the institution's long history of innovation related to cardiovascular disease and the ongoing discoveries being made here today.

*Watch the moving video shown at the event—about Robin Maturi, who, thanks to the expertise of physicians at University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview, survived a life-threatening dissected aorta while she was pregnant with her second child—at [z.umn.edu/redhotsoiree2012](http://z.umn.edu/redhotsoiree2012).*

*Photos by Sandhill Photography*

## Innovators at Heart Summer 2012

Published twice a year by the Minnesota Medical Foundation for the Lillehei Heart Institute, Center for Cardiovascular Repair, Division of Cardiology, Division of Cardiovascular Surgery, Department of Integrative Biology and Physiology, and Rasmussen Center for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention

Nicole Endres  
*Editor*

Barbara Knox  
*Writer*

Lisa Haines, juju  
*Design*

To find out how your gift can make a difference, please contact us at:

612-626-2475  
[heart@mmf.umn.edu](mailto:heart@mmf.umn.edu)

[www.mmf.umn.edu/heart/](http://www.mmf.umn.edu/heart/)

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

©2012 Minnesota Medical Foundation. All rights reserved.