

# Employee Wellness News

Mercer University/September 2011

**The Bottom Line** Heart disease is the number one killer of Americans. Wellness wants to focus on the heart of the matter this September. We are offering special heart-focused programs and screenings throughout the week to bring attention to this important health issue.



♥More than 2,200 Americans die of cardiovascular disease every day – about 1 every 39 seconds.

♥Each year 785,000 Americans will have a coronary attack – about 1 every 25 seconds.

♥More than 795,000 Americans have a stroke each year – about 1 every 40 seconds.

♥Hypertension is known as the “silent killer,” as many never experience symptoms. 33.4% of Americans have high blood pressure (44% of African Americans).

♥Diabetes is highly associated with heart disease. More than 8% of U.S. adults have diabetes, but an additional 36.8% are considered pre-diabetic which means that without intervention, their condition will likely progress to diabetes.

## Are You A Statistic Waiting to Happen?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, you are at an increased risk for a heart attack or stroke:

- Do you smoke?
- Do you have high blood pressure (above 120/80)?
- Is your total cholesterol over 200 mg/dL?
- Are you a man?
- Are you over age 55 (man) or 65 (woman)?
- Do you have diabetes?

If you don't know the answers to any of the above questions, schedule your Health Risk Assessment with Wellness at no charge and learn your numbers! You can also take an assessment quiz at the [American Heart Association's website](#).

## Do You Know the Warning Signs?

Recognizing the signs of a heart attack or stroke are critical; access to medical care can mean the difference between life and death, yet many confuse symptoms of heart attack and stroke with other benign conditions.

Heart Attack: Discomfort in the chest (pressure, squeezing, pain) that lasts more than a few minutes; shortness of breath; pain in upper body (arms, jaw, neck); nausea; light-headedness.

Stroke: Sudden numbness or tingling in face, arm, leg, especially on one side of body; trouble speaking and understanding or confusion; difficulty seeing out of one or both eyes; trouble walking/loss of coordination; sudden severe headache.

Want to learn more about the warning signs of heart attack and stroke and learn basic CPR for heart attack victims? Attend our Lunch and Learn on September 6<sup>th</sup> at noon!

## The Leg Bone's Connected to the...Heart?

People with Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD) have 4-5 times more risk of heart attack or stroke, yet PAD is often undiagnosed by both patients and healthcare professionals. PAD is similar to coronary artery disease (CAD) in that arteries are narrowed and/or blocked thus reducing blood flow to critical areas of the body. The symptoms of PAD often include painful cramping in the hip, thigh or calf muscles especially after activity; leg numbness or weakness; coldness in the lower leg or foot; change of skin color; shiny skin on your legs. If you experience these symptoms see your healthcare provider. PAD is often associated with atherosclerosis in other parts of the body, most importantly the brain and heart, and left untreated PAD can lead to gangrene and amputation. Don't let a pain in the leg lead to more serious health problems!

## Love Your Heart, Reduce Your Stress! Introduction to Wellness Writing with Jan Crocker and Diane Lang

According to research, 50-80% of all illnesses are related to stress. Chronic stress can put you at higher risk for many chronic diseases including heart disease and heart attack. Eliminating stress from your life may be impossible, but you can reduce your stress, improve your relationships and promote self-esteem and happiness with one simple exercise. Jan Crocker (Marketing Communications) and Diane Lang (Student Affairs) tell us how to improve your health one word at a time.

*Question: What is Wellness Writing and what are its benefits?*

Jan & Diane: Wellness Writing is a way of releasing stress. It is a thoughtful attempt to pull together information and emotions into written language in order to gain perspective

*Q: Many of us already have so little free time. I'm afraid I just don't have the time to dedicate to writing every day.*

J&D: The most difficult part is making the initial commitment to writing. Once you start writing and laying out information, it becomes easier to manage your life. You waste less time and gain focus to make the most out of the time you have. You will make better decisions and become more productive. Also, once you've gotten into the habit of writing, you'll look forward to doing it. The benefits are immeasurable!

*Q: What are the keys to successful Wellness Writing? Can I do it wrong?*

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J&D: Schedule a time to write everyday and make it a priority. We recommend starting with 5 minutes to begin with and increasing the time as you feel comfortable. For that entire 5 minutes, block out distractions and focus on your writing. Attach emotions to events and thoughts. Write from your heart and be honest. This type of writing requires no special talent. No one else ever need read it. Wellness Writing is about relieving stress and connecting to your inner wisdom. There is no “right” or “wrong.”

*Q: You are both obviously passionate about writing. Can you share a little about how writing has positively impacted your health?*

J&D: I could easily give you a dozen examples of how writing has helped me alleviate stress in my life. Typically when I feel overwhelmed, I write down a question. One small example (that I feel comfortable sharing) is: “My guest bedroom has turned into a junk room. I am overwhelmed with trying to sort through the things in the room and I don’t know where to start so I get discouraged and feel like a failure. What is the problem?” I write about the problem until I uncover something that is helpful. With this particular question, I discovered that looking at the room as one big mess was making me feel overwhelmed. I needed to develop a written plan of action that involved small (easily achievable) goals (baby steps). Once I had a plan in place, I instantly felt better. I felt empowered. This is a small example of how I got a handle on something that caused me a lot of stress.

### **What’s Cooking at Mercer? Breakfast!**

Ever wish breakfast was already made as you’re rushing out the door? Well now it is thanks to Stephanie Mooring (Academic Resource Center) and her recipe for Mini-Frittatas. Simply cook ahead and store in Ziploc bags and after 45 seconds in the microwave, you’ve got a hot meal in a hurry.



#### **Mini-frittatas** *(makes 12 mini-frittatas)*

*I make these and put them into Ziploc bags at the beginning of the week. Then each morning, I pop two in the microwave for about 45 seconds.*

- 6 eggs
- 2 egg whites
- 1 cup 2% milk
- 1 package [Al Fresco chicken sausage \(country style\)](#)
- ½ cup chopped sweet onion
- ½ cup chopped red bell pepper

¾ cup shredded reduced fat cheddar cheese

1 teaspoon olive oil

Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 350° and spray muffin pan with non-stick spray. Cut sausage links into bite-sized pieces. Add sausage, peppers, onions, and olive oil to a medium-sized skillet. Cook over medium heat until vegetables are tender and sausage is slightly browned (sausage comes fully-cooked). Add about 1 ½ tablespoons of sausage mixture to each muffin cup. Top sausage mixture with a tablespoon of cheese. Whisk together eggs, egg whites, milk, salt, and pepper. Pour egg mixture over the sausage mixture and cheese in muffin cups. Bake for about 20 minutes or until set.

**Looking for bonus points?** You’re in luck...download a copy of this [heart healthy coloring book](#) and share with your little one why he/she should exercise and eat right. If you really impress them, they may color a page just for you. That’s how you can get the September bonus points. Send the colored page through Campus Mail (with the child’s name & your name and email address) to Rachel May/Employee Wellness. The best picture will win both the employee and their little artist a movie ticket!