



MED-CARE AMBULANCE

“In it for Life”

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February 2012 – Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association Op-Ed for Heart Month

By the Numbers...How Statistics and Social Values Could Help America Beat the Odds of Cardiac Arrest

Consider this - it's estimated that nearly 50 percent of Americans make New Year's resolutions. With a population of over 300 million, that's close to 150 million people looking forward to future change. Just weeks into 2012 however, and for many, the plans "to get more organized," "pay off debt," or the ever popular (and costly) "get in better shape," have come and gone faster than a new workout video.

Here's another astounding statistic. The Super Bowl draws a viewing audience of approximately 111 million people, whether they watch for the pregame festivities, halftime entertainment or much anticipated commercials. And since it's February, let's not forget that on Valentine's Day, around 198 million roses are grown and sold.

These numbers are astounding when we examine them in the context of cultural and social events. Yet, they should give us perspective when it comes to the way we approach and respond to something just as important: a leading cause of death in our community.

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is an electrical malfunction of the heart's natural rhythm. It needlessly afflicts nearly 300,000 Americans each year, including children, teens and professional athletes. Though it sounds similar, SCA is not the same as a heart attack. We know how to prevent and respond to SCA, and the keys to increasing survival can be found in bystander intervention and improved emergency response.

Imagine if each person who made a New Year's resolution knew how to perform CPR and use an automated external defibrillator (AED). Or if, instead of roses, 198 million AEDs were deployed in schools, churches, shopping malls and other public gathering places across the country.

February is American Heart Month, an annual designation by Congress for Americans to become more informed about heart health and thus a timely opportunity for us to focus on the nation's leading cause of death. This year, Congress is doing its part to increase awareness of SCA and its survival rate through several important pieces of legislation. Representatives Lois Capps (CA) and Betty Sutton (OH) are spearheading support of the "Teaching Children to Save Lives Act" and "Josh Miller HEARTS Act," respectively, which will provide grants to teach students CPR and fund the placement of AEDs in schools.

As individuals, we have as much power as Congress to affect change and can do so quickly at the local level. Discover where AEDs are located in our area; see if your child's school teaches CPR/AED; call your member of Congress and urge them to support these lifesaving pieces of legislation. To schedule a CPR/AED training course or find an SCA survivor to speak before your group, visit the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association at www.suddencardiacarrest.org.

Taking the time now to focus on SCA may not be as fun as cheering on your favorite football team or enjoying a romantic dinner for two, but it undoubtedly can help save your life or the life of a loved one.

Laurieann Milligan is the leader of the Western Maine Affiliate of the SCAA, a nonprofit advocacy organization singularly focused on SCA prevention and response. Its members are SCA survivors, medical professionals, emergency responders and patient/community advocates all dedicated increasing awareness of SCA, expanding public access to AEDs and other lifesaving devices and educating the public on cardiovascular healthy lifestyles. For more information, visit www.suddencardiacarrest.org or Med-Care Ambulance 273 Main Street Mexico, Me, 04257 364-8748