

For Immediate Release

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Show Your Heart Some Love: Fight Heart Disease Through Prevention

(PALM DESERT, CA) - February 9, 2015... For many Americans the month of February is about paper hearts and the love they represent on Valentine's Day, but it should also be about the human heart and the love we show it by keeping it healthy. In 2012, President Obama declared February "American Heart Month" to raise awareness on the Nation's number one killer of both men and women, cardiovascular disease. CVD includes heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure.

The findings, published in HARC's 2013 Community Health Monitor demonstrate that this is an issue that affects a great number of adults in the Coachella Valley.

- Over one-third of adults (37.8%, or 134,208 adults) have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, otherwise known as hypertension.
- An estimated 8.0% of adults have been diagnosed with heart disease, representing 28,332 adults.
- Approximately 3.0% of adults have been diagnosed with a stroke.

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While noting the prevalence of CVD in the Coachella Valley, it is also important to recognize some of the risk factors that may contribute to this disease. Risk factors include being obese or overweight, high cholesterol, alcohol consumption, tobacco use and diabetes. Approximately 59.5% of Coachella Valley adults are either obese or overweight. With healthy eating habits and regular exercise many of these risk factors can be prevented. As mentioned above, tobacco use is also a risk factor so if you are a current smoker like 16.2% of adults in the Coachella valley, consider quitting today.

In America, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of disability, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), CVD costs the United States over \$300 billion each year including the costs of health care services, medication and lost productivity¹.

HARC's CEO Eileen Packer, RD, said "There is good news though, cardiovascular disease is largely preventable. Maintaining a healthy weight by eating nutritious foods and exercising regularly, quitting smoking and taking -medication as prescribed, can significantly help protect your heart."

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About HARC

Formed in 2006 by a consortium of more than 35 public and private healthcare agencies, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) conducts a confidential community health status assessment in the Coachella Valley every 3 years to identify major health and quality of life issues. The nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization is funded in part by contributions from community partners, as well as entities that contract with the agency for customized public health research. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at (760) 404-1945, or visiting the organization's website at www.HARCDATA.org.

¹ February is American Heart Month. 2014. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/features/heartmonth/>