



SPARKS FLY

at Mended Hearts Annual Conference

Mended Hearts members gather in Nashville for learning, networking and fireworks. *By Heartbeat Editors*



THE GAYLORD OPRYLAND Hotel & Resort provided the perfect backdrop for the 2017 Mended Hearts Annual Conference. The patriotic-themed event was planned for July 2–7 so that attendees could not only learn from speakers and network with one another, but also enjoy fireworks as one big community.

“I’m always humbled by the breadth of the journeys and stories that I hear by being around other Mended Hearts members,” says Larry Haffner, a heart valve patient from the St. Louis, Missouri, area. With more than 230 members and other friends in attendance, there were plenty of heart stories to share. “There’s always a lot to learn about health and cardiac issues, and I want to continue to be involved, increasingly, with Mended Hearts in any way I can help,” says Haffner, who was recently appointed to the Mended Hearts Budget Committee.

Honoring Dedicated Members

Every other year at the conference, Mended Hearts introduces the newly elected Executive Committee and announces winners of several awards. The event also features three days of robust educational programming with speakers covering many topics related to heart disease, patient/family services and chapter growth.

Newly re-inaugurated President Donnette Smith had the pleasure of presenting these awards, including the “Mended Heart of the Year” award to Dr. Fredonia Williams (see separate article). Smith noted that all the award winners — and for that matter, everyone in attendance — represented the highest ideals of Mended Hearts’ mission and vision. She also expressed her gratitude and enthusiasm for the privilege of serving as Mended Hearts President for the next two years.



Eight heart transplant patients were in attendance; seven of them gathered for a photo. Collectively, these survivors represent more than 100 years of life after heart transplant. Back row: Laurel Dodgion, Lynchburg, Virginia; Ed Wainwright, Kissimmee, Florida; Ken Ragan, Concord, North Carolina. Front row: Dianna Amberg, Fresno, California; Sherry Shockley, Cookeville, Tennessee; Denise Widzowski, West Palm Beach, Florida; Cathy Byington, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Byington recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of her heart transplant.

This year’s event also included an opening presentation, “The Vision Thing: Where Do We Go From Here?” by Executive Director Norm Linsky, who honored three long-time Mended Hearts leaders who passed away in recent months: Raul Fernandez, Frank Cecco and Bob Scott. “Mended Hearts is what it is because men and women of their caliber — and yours — dedicate countless hours of service to live out our mission of helping others,” Linsky said.

Linsky also outlined a vision for Mended Hearts, which is based on a book called *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Non-Profits*, by Leslie R. Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant. He stressed that Mended Hearts and Mended Little Hearts already have these practices in place, and have the building blocks for tremendous future growth and service.





And the Winner Is...

The following chapters, partners and individuals were honored during the Mended Hearts Awards Ceremony. The event was part of the 2017 national conference. Be sure to check with your local chapter leaders to find out who won the many regional awards. Congratulations to all nominees and winners!

President's Cup

Recognized for outstanding performance in support of the Mended Hearts' mission:



1-39 Members
Chapter 362, Southeast Texas, Sugarland (Houston)



40-99 Members
Chapter 380, Boise, Idaho



100+ Members
Chapter 379, Gastonia, North Carolina

Hospital of the Year

Recognized for allowing access to heart patients; catheterization patients and family visiting; meeting space; and more. Marvin Keyser accepted the award on behalf of the hospital.



Memorial Regional Hospital, Hollywood, Florida

Sydney & Helen Shuman Nurse Recognition

Recognized for dedication and support of nurses in cardiac care. The winners are drawn from chapter nominations, and two awards of \$250 are given at local chapter presentations. This is a nationally endowed award.

Cherry C Ramsey, RN, BS, C. RN

Cookeville Regional Medical Center, Tennessee Chapter 127

Gina H. Pettigrew, RN

Conroe Regional Hospital, Texas Chapter 245

Mary M. Amato Educational Award

Supports students who are future health care leaders in treating heart disease. Applicants must be currently enrolled in college, technical/trade school or university. This is a \$500 Award to a relative of a Mended Hearts member. This is a nationally endowed award.

Piper A.E. Smith,

Microbiology Major at the University of Montana in Missoula. Granddaughter of Randy Gay, Chapter 324 in Missoula.

Newsletter Awards

Winners are selected based on appearance, content, inclusion of the president's report, digital version and quality articles from members and clinicians.



Newsletter (Monthly) Honorable Mention

CardioActivities Chapter 62, San Diego, California

Editor: Ed Marrone (Jill Bene, Chapter President, accepted the award.)

Newsletter (Monthly) Winner

Heart2Heart Chapter 11, Louisville, Kentucky

Editor: Sandy Larimore

Newsletter (Quarterly) Winner

Heartline Chapter 230, Pontiac, Michigan

Editor: Shirley Kell

Mended Heart of the Year

This award honors someone who demonstrates outstanding service to the mission, nationally and regionally. It also recognizes the winner's length of service; participation on national committees and boards or task forces. (Read more about Dr. Williams on page 7 of this issue.)

Dr. Fredonia B. Williams

Chapter 260 Huntsville, Alabama



The conference gave members a chance to meet the newly elected Executive Committee. From left: Gordon "Gus" Littlefield, Treasurer; Donnette Smith, President; Patrick Farrant, Vice President; Millie Henn, Executive Vice President; and Angel Olvera, Vice President of Mended *Little* Hearts. They were joined by Mended Hearts Executive Director Norm Linsky.



Alden Harken, M.D., won the 2017 Harken Award, named for his father, Dwight E. Harken, M.D. The late Dwight Harken founded Mended Hearts in 1951 with four of his post-surgical heart patients. Donnette Smith, President of Mended Hearts, presented the award to Alden Harken.

Main Attractions

The week's highlight was a presentation by Alden Harken, M.D., the son of Mended Hearts founder Dwight Harken, M.D. Alden Harken's inspiring speech focused on the role of empathy in human relationships and recovery from traumatic events such as a heart attack.

During his presentation, Dr. Harken quoted Katherine Graham, former editor of the *Washington Post*, who said, "The luckiest people in the world are those who are doing something that they think is important and that everyone else thinks is important." He then told the crowd: "That's you all!"

On behalf of everyone in attendance, Donnette Smith thanked Dr. Harken for his presentation and noted that his was one of the most moving events in Mended Hearts' nearly 70-year history. In conclusion, she surprised Dr. Harken by presenting him with Mended Hearts' highest award, the Dwight Emary Harken, M.D., Award, named in honor

of his father. There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Other speakers included John Shannon, B.S. CEP, who spoke about mindful movement following sternotomy; Philip Johnston, Pharm.D., who answered audience questions about medication adherence; and JoAnn Lindenfeld, M.D., FHFSa, who spoke about heart failure and the challenges of managing multiple medications. Their presentations were excellent, informative and appreciated by all.

Julia Carter, a retired teacher from Aiken, South Carolina (Chapter 294), says she was glad she attended. "After our first conference, we decided not to miss any of these great events," Carter says. This was her fifth time attending. She says the biggest takeaways from this year's conference were learning how to advocate for Mended Hearts, how the TAVR procedure provides an important new option for heart valve patients and "how hard working our staff and members are. They are truly inspiring." 

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