

FEATURE

Shining Stars

by Jon Caswell



Doing something right — that’s how you could characterize Mended Hearts. You can’t quibble about the mission — it’s noble to quell fear with compassion. There’s no question about how it’s implemented — good people are doing good things. MHI has good partners to support it — some of the best hospitals and most reputable healthcare corporations and foundations in the nation. Good people, outstanding partners — these are MHI’s shining stars who, combined with a great mission, are evidence we’re doing it right.

Several of those shining stars were honored at this year’s convention in San Antonio — people and partners who have served our organization well and helped it achieve its mission. Support is the name of the game for these individuals and the chapters they work in, as well as the hospitals and foundations. They are what makes MHI great and what have given it its longevity — 56 years of continuous service.



Corporate Award

Much of the excellent work MHI performs is possible because of the underwriting from corporations and foundations that support the mission. In only its second year, this award recognizes corporations or foundations that provide exemplary support to MHI and serve as a model for similar contributors to emulate. Among the criteria considered for the award, beyond monetary support, are responsible and exemplary leadership in advancing quality patient care in general, leadership in fostering support to MHI from other corporate sources and the overall impact of the corporation’s support in advancing the MHI mission.

Because MHI gets excellent support from several corporate and foundation contributors, selection has been a challenge. This year, the Medtronic Foundation was selected for multiple channels of support that it has offered over the years.

This outstanding organization is a world leader in foundation operations and leadership. Since 2002, it has been a primary means of support for MHI field services programs, including the funds for a Field Services Director. Recently, the Foundation renewed a two-year grant of \$75,000 per year to support our visiting program. This grant has helped us reach patients of diverse ages, ethnicities and backgrounds.



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But the support goes far beyond that. Through the Foundation’s support, MHI leaders have had the opportunity to participate in many Foundation activities and seminars designed to foster leadership and training to help MHI improve in performing its mission. Through a newly developed Patient Link Blog, organizations supported by the Foundation can share common questions and experiences to better serve their constituencies.

This summer anyone listening to National Public Radio heard some well-placed and high-profile radio spots with the tagline “Brought to you by the Medtronic Foundation — partnering with Mended Hearts to provide online and hospital support to newly diagnosed heart patients. Learn more at mendedhearts.org.” These spots were heard by many millions of listeners, including Mike Harris, who joined as a result. (For that story, see “The Difference 10 Seconds Can Make” on p. 10.)

This fall the Medtronic Foundation invited MHI and several other organizations it supports to co-host a premiere party for an exciting three-part PBS series titled



Marty Allen, manager of the Patient Link program at the Medtronic Foundation, accepted the Corporate Award on their behalf.



“The Mysterious Human Heart.” This event was a gala kickoff at the Library of Congress and brought together many of the leading organizations in healthcare, research and patient care. “The Medtronic Foundation truly cares about MHI,” said Mended Hearts President Margaret Elbert. “It’s a first-class act in every way.”

Marty Allen, who is the manager of the Patient Link program mentioned above, accepted the award. “All of us who work at the Foundation are grateful to be honored in this way. It’s always great to meet people at the heart of an organization’s work. I am very impressed with the level of dedication to this important work that MHI is doing. We are proud to partner with you.”

“Medtronic has been a great support to MHI, and this award is one way we can say ‘thank you,’” said President Elbert.

Mended Heart of the Year

We now come to the award that personifies the MHI mission in the world. Mended Heart of the Year is awarded for outstanding service given over many years. This year’s winner is a husband-and-wife team with 22 years of combined service to the organization — Calvin and Priscilla Daetwyler, known to everyone as Cal and Pris.

If you’ve been around MHI very long, you’re likely to know one or both of them. If you’ve never met, you’re likely to have been touched by what they’ve done.

The Daetwylers found MHI as the result of Cal’s triple-bypass surgery in 1995, soon after his retirement from Exxon USA. They joined Chapter 38 in Houston the next year and became accredited visitors in 1997.



Pris and Cal Daetwyler of Chapter 38 in Houston received this year’s Mended Heart of the Year Award.

“Through working in MHI, I have gained a great deal of respect for the determination and courage of the heart survivor, the devotion and compassion of the caregiver and the ethics and caring of the professionals who deal with heart disease.” – Pris Daetwyler

Pris must have been good at visiting right away because that year she was asked to revitalize the visiting programs at two of Chapter 38’s satellites. Meanwhile Cal was helping to lead the chapter, first as secretary, then as vice president.

And they were visiting. “Cal and I usually visit in the hospital as a team,” said Pris. “We enjoy our time together and the opportunity for Cal to talk with the patient. I visit with the caregiver. We have fun sharing that experience together.”

Do a job well at MHI, and you’ll get promoted: Pris was appointed chapter visiting chair, and Cal was elected president in 1999. While well-organized, Pris’s accreditation training was also funny and focused on creating rapport. “To me, visiting chair is the most wonderful and rewarding position in MHI,” said Pris. “You work with the nicest people in the world.”

Under Cal’s leadership, Chapter 38 undertook an “executive team” approach to chapter management. In addition to the standing committees, each satellite had a representative on the team. “Although I inherited the satellite structure from previous presidents,” said Cal, “with commitment from the board, including the satellite hosts, the chapter has increased its membership, gained enthusiasm, and we’ve grown to seven satellites.”

Meanwhile, Chapter 38’s visiting program was thriving under Pris, increasing 250 percent. A caregiver herself, she empathizes deeply with them and believes supporting the caregiver supports the patient. She has always emphasized this in her visitor training. “There have been so many improvements in treatment over the years that it’s sometimes hard to tell who is the patient,” said Pris. “Now I tell Cal, ‘Look for the one who looks tired and worn out — that’s the caregiver!’”

A 250-percent increase gets noticed, and Pris was selected an ARD for the Southwest, traveling across the region to train visitors. Cal was elected to a second term as president, then Pris served as Southwest RD in



2003 through 2005, where she added the Austin and San Antonio chapters. While RD, she also served as national visiting chair and chaired the committee responsible for revising the visiting manuals. Many late nights followed.

In his second term, Cal was doing good work of his own, reviving an ailing chapter sufficiently that it won the President's Cup in Boston in 2002. He and Pris started visiting programs in two more hospitals. Term-limited in 2003, he was elected vice president again in 2005 and 2007. Pris is again the chapter visiting chair, while also serving as chair of the national visiting committee. They both still love visiting.

"By far the most enjoyable aspect of MHI is visiting heart patients and their families in the hospital," said Cal. "I feel rewarded in being able to do that. It has been 12 years since my MI and ensuing bypass, and bypass surgery has changed with more off-pump surgeries and now even robotic surgery. Drug-coated stents are now common. Because of these changes, MHI has had to change to keep abreast of the new procedures."

Clearly Cal and Pris love MHI. Said Pris, "Through working in MHI, I have gained a great deal of respect for the determination and courage of the heart survivor, the devotion and compassion of the caregiver and the ethics and caring of the professionals who deal with heart disease. You cannot devote time to these individuals without gaining strength yourself to meet your own challenges in all aspects of life. It is an honor to be recognized by such a wonderful group. However, I wish someone had told me ahead of time that we were to be honored. I certainly wouldn't have worn that dorky hat, Western night or not!"

"I was so excited to give this award because I believe it is so well deserved," said President Elbert. "Cal and Pris have shown their true love of our organization and have done whatever they were asked. Most times these were jobs that were behind the scenes and they did them with gusto. They ask for nothing and give much; they are true Mended Hearts."

The Difference 10 Seconds Can Make

Mike Harris, age 40, might well have been the newest member of Mended Hearts at the national convention in San Antonio. It had only been a month since his surgery and less time than that since he'd joined. An environmental attorney in California, he'd been diagnosed in May with an atrial septal defect (ASD), basically a hole in his heart.



"Although I felt just fine," Mike said, "the doctors said my heart was pretty enlarged and there were signs of early pulmonary hypertension and congestive heart failure. Although I still ran competitively and exercised daily, I could see that I was a step slower the past couple of years."

After the diagnosis, Mike and his wife Charlotte had a choice to make: Should he have surgery, which meant a longer recovery time but is the "gold standard" for the past

35 years in ASD repair, or should he have it patched with a mesh disc implanted by a catheter? Finally they decided on the less invasive mesh-disc repair, even though there is no long-term data on outcomes.

"About a week before my procedure, Wednesday, August 1st, I believe, I was working in my office," Mike recalled. "I was pretty nervous because I did not know if 40 years of my heart working so hard meant my life expectancy would be shortened. I'd also never been in the hospital before and was worried about potential complications."

It was mid-morning and he was listening to National Public Radio. "About 11, I heard the Medtronic Foundation ad spot for Mended Hearts, but I didn't hear the specifics. Then about 30 minutes later it aired again, and I quickly wrote down the Internet address. Within minutes I was at the MHI website." There he found information on local chapters and links that took him to other ASD information.

The following Sunday Mike got a call from Jeanece Varndell, who told him about a 70-year-old member in San Diego who'd had the same condition and was still an active tennis player. "She made me feel a lot better."

Mike's procedure went without a hitch, and a week later he was back at work. His first day back he got a call from Shirley Musil, age 82, from Chapter 79, Orange, California. She'd had surgery for an ASD more than 40 years before, when she was 40 years old. Shirley's surgery had been long and difficult with a lengthy recovery; Mike's procedure took 45 minutes followed by an overnight hospital stay.

"Shirley's call did two things for me," said Mike. "First, it confirmed that I had chosen the right procedure, and second, it made me realize I had a long life in front of me. She also asked if Charlotte and I would represent Chapter 79 at the convention because she couldn't attend and it would have been the first time in over 20 years that Chapter 79 wasn't represented. Well, that did not happen. We had a wonderful time in San Antonio. I am hooked and a lifetime Mended Heart now. And it all started with a 10-second radio ad!"



“Each year I am amazed at how some chapters just step up and do outstanding things,” said President Elbert. “They get their membership around them and the whole chapter contributes in whatever way they can. They know how important it is to have a strong support system and keep people interested and loving what they do. Chapter 28 did an outstanding job this year.”

President’s Cup

The President’s Cup recognizes excellence at the chapter level. Each year the selection is difficult because there are so many outstanding chapters in MHI. In choosing the recipient, the president evaluates every aspect of chapter activity and responsibility. Just to be considered, chapters must turn in their annual reports on time. Other considerations include the content of chapter meetings, growth in the number of visits and visitors trained, attendance, growth, the number of scholarships awarded and local public recognition.

This year’s award goes to Chapter 28 in Richmond, Virginia. Mary Shreve is the chapter president. She’s a 12-year bypass survivor who was president from 2002-05, and was reinstalled as president again in 2007. “We’ve always had an active chapter,” Mary said. They have to be active — Chapter 28 visits at six hospitals in the Richmond area. “This year is our 33rd year of service, and we have 120 members.”

Mary is quick to point out that Chapter 28 has a secret weapon, treasurer Jerry Grossman. “He is a terrific fundraiser,” said Mary. “He isn’t afraid to ask anybody for money for our causes, like for AEDs. We’ve raised money for 23 of those, and much of that came through Jerry. In the 2006 Heart Walk he raised the most money in the Metro AHA Board’s ‘Executive Challenge,’ and he was the fourth largest fundraiser overall. Three other members were recognized as ‘Heart and Sole’ fundraisers for their efforts, too.” Chapter 28 received a plaque as one of the top fundraising organizations.

Chapter 28 has an excellent relationship with its local American Heart Association. They’ve arrange for several thousand dollars in auction items for the Heart Gala’s silent auction. And at last year’s Go Red For Women, Jerry’s money-raising acumen resulted in a \$10,000 donation. In addition, 37 members of Chapter 28 gave 1,348 volunteer hours to the AHA, the second highest total in the Mid-Atlantic Region. “We do have a close relationship with the AHA. One of our members is on



Mary Shreve (l), President of Chapter 28 in Richmond, Virginia accepted the President’s Cup Award on behalf of her chapter from MHI President Margaret Elbert (r).

the board of the Mid-Atlantic Affiliate,” said Mary, “and an AHA staff director is on our executive committee.”

Chapter 28 has 23 active accredited visitors who made more than 3700 visits last year at the six hospitals where they visit. In the first nine months of 2007, they’ve made 2800 visits.

Chapter 28 is an active supporter of Mended *Little* Hearts Richmond Chapter 9. “We pay their charter fees every year,” said Mary. “And our members contribute items, like knitted baby blankets, to their ‘Care Packages.’ These are sent to all families that have to go out of town for pediatric cardiac surgery. We invite them to our holiday dinner meeting and family picnic in the fall. Jodi LeMacks, the new national staff Program Coordinator for MLH, used to be the coordinator for our local chapter, which is very active. The children are remarkable and add so much to our gatherings. We feel fortunate that we have the privilege of being part of MLH.”



Beyond visiting and raising money for AEDs, Chapter 28 is active in educating the next generation of healthcare providers. "In addition to being a great fundraiser, Jerry Grossman is a pharmacist and an artificial valve recipient who speaks regularly to the pharmacy and nursing students at Medical College of Virginia (MCV)," Mary said. "Another member, Greg Lowe, who is a transplant recipient, speaks to the medical students at MCV as well as to the nursing students at Bon Secours Memorial School of Nursing. He has been asked to be on the speakers bureau for LifeNet, a nonprofit organ procurement agency."

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Hospital Award

Of course, MHI wouldn't exist if not for its hospital partners. That said, there are varying degrees of support and cooperation. Partner hospitals nominated in this category were evaluated in eight categories, from providing reasonable access to patients to providing a consistent contact person to recognizing MHI contributions. Judging by the reports of the nominated hospitals, many chapters have especially generous and helpful partners.

This year the committee gave the hospital award to St. Joseph Mercy Oakland (SJMO) Hospital in Pontiac, Michigan, which was nominated by Chapter 230. We profiled St. Joseph Mercy in the Fall issue of *Heartbeat* with three other finalists in this category. As you read there, SJMO is one of those partners that really supports MHI in fulfilling its mission.



Accepting the Hospital Award are (l-r) Janet Gilbert and Sue Sprau of St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, joined by Chapter 230 representatives Shirley Kell and Judi Sage.

"We feel that MHI is an extension of our program, an integral component that helps us achieve some of the highest success rates in care and satisfaction in Michigan. The nurses rely on their information, education and support for post-surgical care and greatly appreciate their 'collegial' relationship."

"This was a very difficult award; we had so many entries, and each hospital was outstanding. We tried very hard to choose the best one. I believe this committee had the hardest job. SJMO is an outstanding hospital that treats MHI like a precious gift," said President Elbert.

"We're extremely proud of our Mended Hearts program and its many volunteers," said Rob Fisher, business manager and MHI contact person. "We consider ourselves lucky to have them as part of our team. This was a wonderful honor.

"We feel that MHI is an extension of our program, an integral component that helps us achieve some of the highest success rates in care and satisfaction in Michigan. The nurses rely on their information, education and support for post-surgical care and greatly appreciate their 'collegial' relationship. The monthly programs offered to patients after discharge continue that education and support and are invaluable to the families in supporting their loved ones. MHI enhances the cardiac rehabilitation process, and many of the patients and their families build strong bonds within the group. I know that enhances the support during difficult times."

"The members of Chapter 230 were so excited to have SJMO receive the Hospital of the Year Award," said Shirley Kell, chapter secretary and membership chair. "It shows how two organizations can work cohesively together for the physical and mental health and well-being of our heart patients. They work so tirelessly with us to provide speakers and audio equipment for our meetings, refreshments, office space for our supplies for the patients, free parking for visitors and our meeting attendees and funds for officers to go to the national convention. It is a successful, rewarding relationship that can only be achieved when two groups are willing to give and take for the good of others." ❤️

See final list of award winners on page 12. See page 24 for more photos and reflections on the 55th Annual Convention.

Award Winners from the 55th Annual Convention

The Sydney & Helen Shuman Nurse Recognition Award

For nurses who make a positive difference in the care of heart patients during treatment and recovery. The award includes a \$250 cash award.

Dona Shehan

Great Falls, Montana, Chapter 133

Susan Litchford

Dover, Delaware, Chapter 255

The Mary M. Amato Education Award

For two students in the healthcare field. Each award includes a \$500 cash award.

Joseph Habibi

Richmond, Virginia, Chapter 28

Kaci Smith

Victoria, Texas, Chapter 234

President's Cup Award

This award honors the chapter that has had significant achievements in many areas. Some of the key criteria include content of chapter meetings, variety of heart-patient-related subjects, growth in number of visits and visitors trained, attendance at chapter meetings and other MHI meetings as well as growth in membership and local public recognition.

Chapter 28

Richmond, Virginia; Mary Shreve, President

The two runners-up were:

Chapter 127

Cookeville, Tennessee; Tom Little, President

Chapter 81

Atlanta, Georgia; Doug Steingraber, President

The Mended Heart of the Year Award

Cal and Pris Daetwyler

Chapter 38, Houston, Texas

Corporate Award

Medtronic Foundation

Hospital Award

St. Joseph Mercy Oakland

St. Joseph is the hospital partner for Chapter 230, Pontiac, Michigan.

Newsletter Awards

These recognize those members who keep their fellow chapter members informed of local and national activities as well as provide important health and lifestyle information to improve patients' lives. There are three divisions — quarterly, bi-monthly and monthly.

Monthly Newsletters

Award of Excellence – *Blue Ridge Heart Beat*

Barbara Holdren, Editor

Lynchburg, Virginia, Chapter 16

Award of Excellence – *The Beat Goes On*

Judy Lund, Editor

Newport News, Virginia, Chapter 119

Award of Excellence – *The Beat Goes On*

John Kraemer, Editor

Greater Cleveland, Ohio, Chapter 138

Honorable Mention – *Heart Lines*

Bonita Schultz, Editor

Longmont, Colorado, Chapter 227

Honorable Mention – *Ticker Tape*

Dotti Peek, Editor

Circle City/Indianapolis, Indiana, Chapter 78

Bi-Monthly Newsletters

Award of Excellence – *Nova-Fax*

Don and Ruth Owens, Editors

Northern Virginia, Chapter 200

Honorable Mention – *Heartbeat of Rochester*

Brent Gosson, Editor

Greater Rochester, New York, Chapter 50

Honorable Mention – *Heart to Heart*

Bart Kazin, Editor

Cape Cod Hyannis, Massachusetts, Chapter 315

Quarterly Newsletters

Award of Excellence – *Little Rhody Hot Hearts*

Doris Hookey, Editor

Rhode Island, Chapter 185

Honorable Mention – *Heart to Heart*

Andre Gregorie, Editor

Landmark Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Chapter 338