



HUSTON STREET JOINS MENDED HEARTS WITH AN IMPORTANT HEART HEALTH MESSAGE: GET YOUR FLU SHOT!

I Heart Flu Shots™ Brings Public Health Message to Austin's American Heart Association Heart Walk

Austin, TX, October 17, 2008 – Heart disease was the leading cause of death among Texans in 2001, accounting for almost three in every 10 deaths. People with heart disease are at an increased risk for serious and potentially life-threatening complications from the flu. Therefore, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that heart disease patients get vaccinated against the flu each year. Tomorrow, Mended Hearts, a national patient support group affiliated with the American Heart Association (AHA), is spreading the word among heart patients to get the flu shot.

“With this weekend’s AHA Heart Walk in front of the Texas Capitol, heart health is top of mind in Austin. However, many people are still not taking basic steps – like getting a flu shot – to help protect themselves,” said Catherine Larson, volunteer assistant regional director of Mended Hearts.

Huston Street, a local Austin resident and relief pitcher for the Oakland Athletics, has joined Mended Hearts to help spread this important message to the Austin community. “I have seen the devastating effects of heart disease, and know how important it is to protect against its complications,” explained Street. “Since the flu can be so dangerous for heart patients, it is important to make people with heart disease aware of the importance of an annual flu vaccination.”

This effort is part of the Mended Hearts initiative, ‘I Heart Flu Shots™’ which was launched in 2007 to help educate people living with heart disease about the importance of getting a flu shot. The flu can worsen heart disease and can lead to complications including viral or bacterial pneumonia. Getting the flu shot is an important way for heart disease patients to help protect themselves. The AHA and the American College of Cardiology (ACC) recommend that the more than 12 million people in the U.S. with cardiovascular conditions receive an annual flu shot. Larson adds, “I Heart Flu Shots is a public health initiative to help protect the citizens of Austin against the flu – an infection which can be prevented.”

Sadly, in 2005 only one in three adults with heart disease was vaccinated against the flu.

Flu shots are generally well-tolerated. People with allergies to eggs or chickens, or who have had a life-threatening reaction to a previous influenza vaccination, should not receive a flu shot.

Austin’s Health Department will offer flu shots to uninsured or underinsured Austin/Travis County residents who are at a high risk of complications, including those living with a chronic disease. Several clinics in the area will provide the flu shots through November. For more details including dates and locations, visit www.ci.austin.tx.us/health.

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ABOUT FLU

Influenza, commonly known as “the flu,” is a contagious and potentially deadly infection that affects on average, five percent to 20 percent of the total U.S. population each flu season. In past years, flu has caused an average of 36,000 deaths and more than 200,000 hospitalizations annually. Most of these deaths occurred in people 65 years of age and older. The flu is easily passed from one person to another through the air by droplets released when an infected individual coughs or sneezes, but may also be spread by direct contact with influenza virus-contaminated surfaces.

For more information about I Heart Flu Shots™, visit www.iheartflushots.com.

ABOUT MENDED HEARTS

Mended Hearts is a community-based, nationwide heart patient support group affiliated with the American Heart Association and founded more than 50 years ago. More than 17,000 members operate through 260 local chapters across the United States with two in Canada. Recognized for its role in facilitating a positive patient-care experience, Mended Hearts partners with 430 hospitals and rehabilitation clinics to offer heart patient services through visiting programs, support group meetings and educational forums. Mended Hearts is dedicated to inspiring hope in heart disease patients and their families. Mended Hearts Inc. received funding and other support from GlaxoSmithKline for the I Heart Flu Shots™ initiative.

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