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American Heart Month

MR. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize American Heart Month and commend the staff and volunteers of the American Heart Association, and the organizations in New Jersey and around the country for participating in this year's successful effort to raise awareness of heart disease and the associated risks.

American Heart Month is a critical public awareness tool that helps promote heart-healthy lifestyles, with a focus on prevention and incorporating a healthy diet and exercise into all of our daily lives.

Last Congress, I was honored to accept the position of co-chair of the Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition. For nearly 20 years, the Coalition has served as a resource for all members of Congress and worked to advance federal policies that raise the quality of life for individuals with heart disease.

The partnership of the Association and the Coalition is critical to raising awareness of the disease and ensuring those of us making decisions on funding and policy are educated on how what we do affects those suffering. The Association's briefings—which they organize throughout the year—are a key component of this strategy.

Heart and stroke patients, as well as their loved ones and caregivers, need vocal advocates on Capitol Hill to ensure access to quality care and treatments. We have a duty to see that programs aimed at combating cardiovascular disease, or CVD, as well as medical research for prevention and treatment of stroke and heart attacks, are supported appropriately at the federal level.

Mr. Speaker, the numbers and their public health implications are shocking. CVD is the nation's number one killer. A staggering 85.6 million people—1 in 3 American adults—suffer from heart disease, stroke, or other cardiovascular diseases. An American dies from cardiovascular disease every 40 seconds. It is estimated that by 2030, about 44 percent of all adult Americans will be affected by heart disease—with direct and indirect costs from CVD estimated to reach almost \$1 trillion by 2030.

Further, as both the Association and the CDC point out, heart disease is sometimes thought of as a "man's disease." Yet, heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases are the No. 1 killer of women in the United States, claiming the lives of 398,035 women per year. According to the Heart Association, nearly half of all women are not aware that heart disease is the leading cause of death for women.

That's worth repeating, Mr. Speaker. Every minute, one woman dies as a result of CVD or a stroke.

The American Heart Association is leading the charge in raising awareness of this fact through coordinated campaigns, like National Wear Red Day and Go Red For Women.

One organization working in my Congressional district is the Meridian Health Foundation's "Women's Heart Fund." Since its inception in 2007, the Foundation—focused on promoting heart health in Monmouth and Ocean County—has funded nursing scholarships, equipment for management of the most severe heart

attacks and vascular screenings, and boosted funding for the Pediatric Cardiology Program at the K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital and the CardioVascular Intensive Care Unit at the Jersey Shore University Medical Center, which opened last year.

While American Heart Month comes to a close tomorrow, it's important we continue these efforts year round. I would like to thank all of my colleagues who are members of the Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition and urge those who have not yet joined to do so. Help us continue and grow the critical Coalition-Association partnership that is working to improve our constituents' health, families, and future.