



## American Heart Association

BY DONNA KATO

It's a partnership and bond that formed recently to help fight a common enemy, the number one killer of women: heart disease.

For more than 20 years, the members of the American Heart Association's Circle of Red on the Central Coast have been the voice of the Go Red movement, passionately spreading the message of heart health and cardiovascular risk. Since last year, these women have had the help of the men of the Red Tie Society, a group which came together in 2015 to support the mission of the local Circle of Red.

Together, the dynamic members of both organizations contribute significant resources and influence in their communities to fund lifesaving research, education and advocacy for heart health on a local and national level in the hope that mothers, daughters, wives, sisters and other loved ones won't have to suffer from heart disease, especially when it's preventable.

"I've had heart disease in my family and it's a big motivator for me," said Stephen Pessagno, a founding member of the Central Coast Red Tie Society (RTS) and chair of the 2017 Go Red For

Women Luncheon.

The local Red Tie Society's five members include two lawyers, a doctor and two business executives – a small but mighty coalition with the goal of raising funds, awareness and support for the local Heart Association chapter. In just a year, they've helped raise \$15,000 through the annual L+G, LLP Find Your Red event and membership dues.

Pessagno, an attorney for L+G, LLP, said the group is busy recruiting more members and brainstorming ideas for new events.

"We're just asking them to support the women in their lives because heart disease is more common and dangerous than most of us know," he said.

Although their dedication to the mission is serious, the members of the Red Tie Society advance the message while having fun, too, gathering for an annual photoshoot event to document living in their beautiful community, for instance, and hosting exclusive social hours.

And, what's a Red Tie Society without a red tie? Members are given a custom American Heart Association tie that distinguishes them

as a dedicated member of a special band of brothers helping in the fight against heart disease in women.

"It's about inclusive conversations and an opportunity to talk about an issue that touches most of us," said Dr. Bettye Saxton, the 2016 Chair of the Circle of Red, of the Red Tie Society's involvement.

She sees a future with more collaborations, including the possibility of a golf tournament in one of the world's most renowned spots for the sport.

"Three holes would be perfect," says Saxton, who works with AT&T External Affairs. "That leaves time for a meet-and-greet to discuss what we're there for."

Pessagno says the RTS members think of themselves as counterparts to the women of the Circle of Red. Many of the 18 women currently active in the Central Coast group have been involved since its inception in the mid-1990s, raising funds primarily on behalf of Go Red for Women, the American Heart Association's national movement to end heart disease and stroke in women. Members and supporters are thanked and acknowledged by local AHA chapters at lively luncheons held annually. This year, the Northern Central Coast's event was held at The Inn at Spanish Bay in Monterey in February. Both the Circle of Red and the Red Tie Society welcomed more than 300 guests to the luncheon, which raised about \$100,000.

As a part of a network that works actively all year to speak out for women everywhere, the Central Coast Circle of Red members help raise awareness and funds through various events, including Sip & Learn sessions and the popular photoshoot. Sip & Learn invites attendees to sip a beverage while listening to experts talk about topics as general as wellness, to a speaker who will help "everyone charm their seeking soul". The photoshoot takes participants around wonderfully picturesque Monterey County. Perks for Circle of Red members have included invitations to private estates, the Monterey Bay Aquarium after hours, and socializing with the handsome first responders of Pebble Beach. It's always celebrated with food, wine and often, a

“Glam Squad.”

“The Circle of Red and the Red Tie Society are such an integral part of the American Heart Association on the Central Coast because they are our voice,” said Helen De Young, the regional director for AHA. “These volunteers are able to speak to our mission with such passion. My conversations with them continually reinforce my dedication to fighting heart disease and improving the lifestyle of our community members.”

Both the Circle of Red and the Red Tie Society are actively recruiting new members. To be involved or to learn more please contact the local office at 831.757.6221 or Helen.DeYoung@heart.org.

### Upcoming Events

The American Heart Association’s Northern Central Coast Heart Walk is an annual 5K event that inspires hundreds of walkers to raise funds for heart disease, stroke research and community outreach programs. By promoting lives free of cardiovascular disease and stroke, walking is a good first step to becoming physically active and heart healthy. Join

**Clockwise from top left: Members of the 2015 Circle of Red. Members of the 2010 Circle of Red. Kurt Gollnick, Bill Uretsky, Red Tie Society Founding member Jeff Gilles at the 2016 Find Your Red Event.**



hundreds of area residents as they walk or run with family, friends, co-workers, and survivors of heart disease and stroke on Saturday, Oct. 22, 2016, beginning at the Monterey Custom House Plaza. During the event attendees can enjoy free health screenings, food, and of course, fun. For more information, go to [CentralCoastHeartWalk.org](http://CentralCoastHeartWalk.org).

Other planned but yet-to-be-scheduled events include a summer hike, an exclusive golf and dining event, a fall Sip & Learn, and the photoshoot, which will be held in October. **ce**



### Circle of Red Members

Dr. Bettye Saxon, Chair  
Lucia Boggiatto  
Lavonne Chin  
Carol Chorbajian  
Elain Dotseth  
Clarice Dunbar  
Heidi Keller  
Laurie Kleinman, M.D.  
Laurel Krzeminski  
Vivien Lindley  
Colleen Mann  
Stacey Montoya  
Gina Nucci  
Heidi Silva  
Claudia Alexander Smith  
Jean Stallings  
Suzette Urquides  
Barbara White Thompson

### Red Tie Society Members

Dan Lee  
Stephen Pessagno  
Jeff Gilles  
David Gill  
Dr. Christopher Oh