

# DEPARTMENT OF PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

## KEEP YOUR HEART HEALTHY PROGRAM







## NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY FEINBERG SCHOOL OF MEDICINE DEPARTMENT OF PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

### KEEP YOUR HEART HEALTHY PROGRAM

Today's medical schools typically focus on the treatment of disease, rather than prevention. Few medical students receive significant didactic instruction or clinical experience in preventive medicine in community-based settings in either their preclinical or clinical years of medical school. Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, a longtime innovator and leader in medical education and training, has changed this paradigm for the better. A powerful and shining example is the **Keep Your Heart Healthy Program**.

The Keep Your Heart Healthy Program is housed in Feinberg's world-class Department of Preventive Medicine. The Department is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> nationally among its peers for garnering National Institutes of Health research funding awards\*. Department faculty members are renowned for leading groundbreaking studies and programs that have helped to shape the field of preventive medicine and its future.

Keep Your Heart Healthy screens Chicago residents in underserved communities for cardiovascular health risks. It is the first program of its kind in the country. It embraces a multitude of mission-driven objectives and delivers results for medical students, residents, vulnerable participants, underserved communities, and local organizations.

Since the program started in August 2013, Feinberg medical students and faculty have screened and counseled more than 5,000 participants, resulting in 400 referrals of individuals at high risk for developing cardiovascular disease. More than half of first-year medical students at Feinberg and a third of our second-year students volunteer in the program, as do residents in internal medicine and fellows in cardiology.

### AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION TO A MAJOR CHALLENGE

Cardiovascular diseases and conditions—including coronary artery disease, arrhythmias, heart failure, stroke, and high blood pressure—are the leading cause of preventable morbidity and mortality in Chicago as well as the United States as a whole. This is particularly true in low-income communities. The total economic costs of cardiovascular disease in the United States exceed 300 billion dollars annually, including costs of medical care and lost wages and productivity.

Through Keep Your Heart Healthy, pre-clinical Northwestern medical students, educated and mentored in cardiovascular disease prevention by a multi-disciplinary team of Feinberg faculty experts, spend their time in low-income communities of Chicago, such as Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, and South Chicago. In these communities, they have the opportunity to collaborate with multiple community partner organizations, as well as the Chicago Department of Public Health.



"Through the skilled hands and passion of our medical students, we work with the community and are making a difference. Keep Your Heart Healthy is improving cardiovascular health among Chicagoans."

Donald M. Lloyd-Jones, MD, ScM, FACC, FAHA, Senior Associate Dean for Clinical and Translational Research, Chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine at Feinberg, and a cardiologist at Northwestern Memorial Hospital

*\*Rankings from Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research*

Twice every week, these medical students, supervised by a faculty physician, attend to dozens of participants who line up at Keep Your Heart Healthy Program screening events at community centers, community festivals, food drives, churches, and schools. Patients are screened and counseled on behavior and risk factor modifications, and referred for primary care follow-up as needed. The Program is modeled on the American Heart Association's "Life's Simple 7" framework for cardiovascular health. Counseling centers on heart healthy eating patterns, physical activity, achieving a healthy weight, smoking cessation, and the importance of monitoring blood pressure and blood sugar.

### **STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY**

Lives are changed in these community-based events, including a transformation which often takes place with our participating Feinberg medical students. Our students acquire practical knowledge of cardiovascular disease prevention, apply their medical knowledge to participants who are often in desperate need of attention, and build interpersonal communication skills. They are able to put into practice motivational interviewing techniques, and are exposed to an increasingly important new healthcare environment—a non-clinic based, service-learning setting.

One first-year medical student said, "Keep Your Heart Healthy has made a difference in the way I interact with patients." Another said, "I learned that the program is more about empowering others to come up with their own plans for change." A fourth-year medical student remarked, "Keep Your Heart Healthy represents experiential learning in its purest form, as we take what we learn in the classroom and see its impact in a very real setting."

Stephen Havas, MD, MPH, MS, FACP, FAHA, a professor of preventive medicine at Feinberg, serves as Northwestern's leader of the Keep Your Heart Healthy Program.

"I dreamed about doing a project like this for years," said Dr. Havas. "It is lovely to behold the relationships and interaction the students have with program participants. The excitement, indeed, is palpable."

Dr. Havas cites student participation and leadership as the cornerstone of the program. "Students volunteer for the program in very large numbers."

Feinberg students have demonstrated their support for and strong interest in the program. In fact, they organized a Student Advisory Committee and successfully lobbied to add the Keep Your Heart



Healthy Program as an elective within the medical school's curriculum.

There are precious few examples to be found of an academic partner engaging with a city's public health department and community-based organizations to foster a program that targets cardiovascular disease prevention in high-risk neighborhoods. In Chicago, the Keep Your Heart Healthy Program at Feinberg is doing just that. Multiple stakeholders benefit. Low-income residents receive free medical screening and counseling, pre-clinical students gain invaluable training, families are healthier, and financially-challenged neighborhoods in Chicago are richer for this collaborative program that makes an extraordinary difference.

### **PHILANTHROPIC OPPORTUNITY**

Keep Your Heart Healthy has made great inroads since it launched as a five-month pilot program more than two years ago. Along with the numerous benefits it has generated for participants, the highly popular program has proven its educational merits and its need for a permanent position in Feinberg's training offerings. For the program to continue its impactful work, philanthropic funding is essential to replace the founding grant that was given to the Chicago Department of Public Health and that will end in December 2016.

Northwestern is most fortunate to have dedicated friends and supportive organizations that share the priorities of the University. These advocates regularly step forward with financial investments to help advance initiatives that otherwise might not flourish.

The Keep Your Heart Healthy Program at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine looks to those potential partners who recognize the program's effectiveness and see the importance of continuing its work. Philanthropic support from generous individuals and groups in the form of outright gifts and endowments will be crucial in continuing the positive trajectory of Keep Your Heart Healthy.

## Keep Your Heart Healthy Executive Committee

### **Stephen Havas, MD, MPH, MS, FACP, FAHA**

*Principal Investigator and Chair  
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**For more information about supporting the  
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