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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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# NYC Go Red for Women movement: STEM Goes Red

Chelsea Beecher, Director of Development for the American Heart Association spoke to HealthManagement.org about the STEM Goes Red Movement, highlighting its goals, impact and future outlook.

Chelsea Beecher serves as the Director of Development for the American Heart & Stroke Association in New York City. Chelsea passionately works to develop partner focused relationships that engage employees, clients, and consumers, and the community, ultimately powering AHA's mission: to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.

Chelsea led the launch of STEM Goes Red in New York City and received the Innovator of the Year Award in 2018 for this initiative. STEM Goes Red aims to empower young women to pursue science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers, and arm them with tools and resources to experience good health and wellbeing. The initiative is successfully inspiring high school girls to pursue STEM degrees in higher education, and closing the gender gap in STEM careers.

As the No. 1 killer of women - claiming the lives of 1 in 3 women - cardiovascular disease forces us to consider that a woman we know and love may be affected at any age. Beating heart disease and stroke means more time for women to be change makers, business leaders and innovators, and more time to be moms, sisters, partners, and friends.

Chelsea Beecher spoke to HealthManagement.org about the NYC Go Red for Women Movement: STEM Goes Red, providing more insight into the primary goals, impact and future outlook of this initiative.

“STEM GOES RED IS A NEW INITIATIVE THAT AIMS TO EMPOWER YOUNG WOMEN TO PURSUE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATH (STEM) CAREERS”

**You recently received the Innovator of the Year Award for launching STEM Goes Red in NYC. Could you tell us something about the NYC Go Red for Women Movement: STEM Goes Red?**

Heart disease is the number 1 killer of women, killing more women than all forms of cancer combined, but nearly 80% of cardiac events can be prevented. The American Heart Association rallies women to become aware of their risks and provides simple, actionable steps for improving their overall health and wellbeing through the Go Red for Women movement.

STEM Goes Red is a new initiative of the Go Red for Women movement to empower high school girls to pursue science, technology, engineering, and math careers and become driving forces for health in their communities.

**What are the primary goals of the STEM Goes Red movement?**

There are 3 primary goals of the STEM Goes Red movement:

**1. Empowering the next generation of future female STEM leaders**

– Millions of STEM jobs are becoming available, but there are not enough skilled workers to fill them. Moreover, women are highly underrepresented, occupying only 24% of jobs in STEM-related fields. It's predicted that by 2030, half of all vacant STEM jobs will be in the healthcare sector. We want to ensure that the brightest minds are working to help us find cures for heart disease and stroke and helping us to live healthy.

**2. Breaking down barriers to better health**

– Wealth and education are key social determinants of health, and we want to ensure that healthy living is not a luxury. For example, there are 1.2 million people in New York who are affected by food deserts with no access to fresh foods. We need to change that! While we work towards health equity, making the healthy choice the easy choice no matter where you live, work, learn, play, or pray, we want to enlighten young women to the potential that a job in STEM will provide them. Women with STEM jobs earn up to 35%

more than comparable women in non-STEM jobs, and 40% more than men with non-STEM jobs. This type of salary will allow them to live in a safe environment with walking paths that provide the opportunity to be more physically active, and the ability to shop for the fresh food and produce at the local store.

**3. Inspiring a commitment to be healthy for good**

The high school years are a pivotal time in life, an exciting, but also a stressful time, when young women are becoming more independent, taking standardised tests, applying to college, moving away from home, starting relationships, and so on and so forth. We want to be there to support them! Through STEM Goes Red we provide tools and resources for eating smart, moving more, and being well. We want to prevent bad habits from forming because bad habits are hard to break.

**What role do you think the STEM Goes Red movement can play in tackling heart disease?**

Through our health messaging and prevention efforts,

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we are saving lives by stopping heart disease before it starts.

By providing young women with the chance to come together to connect with established female leaders, we believe that they will walk away with the support system and confidence to pursue their dreams. The American Heart Association has funded 13 Nobel Prize winners (none women). We hope we will have inspired a future female Nobel Prize winner, a scientist, researcher, cardiologist, neurologist, or anyone who will diagnose, treat, or prevent or cure heart disease or stroke.

**Can you give us any specific examples as to how this movement has made an impact on the management/prevention of heart disease?**

Go Red for Women (GRFW) is celebrating its 15 year anniversary. Today, more women than ever recognise that a woman's leading cause of death is heart disease.

- 6 out of 10 women have either heard of the GRFW initiative or have seen the GRFW logo
- 91% of GRFW supporters reported having made healthy lifestyle changes
- \$482M raised by GRFW luncheons to support research, education, advocacy, prevention, and awareness programmes
- 3.6M+ women digitally interact with GRFW across all its platforms

**Currently, the STEM Goes Red Movement is only active in the US. Do you have any plans on expanding it or taking on a more global approach?**

Go Red for Women launched in 2004 as an awareness campaign and quickly grew into an international movement and has become a platform for real change. The inaugural full-day STEM Goes Red event in NYC impacted 100 high school girls, and over 2,000 female students participated in events across the country. Our goal in NYC, and I imagine in STEM markets across the country, is to provide more year-round engagement and reach more local students. I expect that STEM Goes Red will reach a global scale much like Go Red for Women, which is now in 42 countries.

**The gender gap in the field of cardiology has been highlighted quite a bit in the recent months. What do you think needs to be done to reduce this gap?**

What's interesting is that emerging research

suggests female heart attack patients have better outcomes when treated by female physicians. We need to increase the number of women who are treating women in healthcare, researching conditions that affect women differently than men, and creating products and resources for women that help them live better. By uniting women of all generations around our mission to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives; by enlightening young women to the need and possibilities that exist in healthcare; and by igniting the potential that lives within these girls, we can close the gender gap and reduce the mortality rates from cardiovascular disease in women.

**You are also actively involved with the Heart & Stroke Innovation Forum organised by the American Heart Association? Could you tell us something about that?**

Prior to leading STEM Goes Red, I helped launch the Heart & Stroke Innovation Forum, which was an annual event in NYC that brought together world-renown experts and leaders in academia, industry, and investment for a collaborative discussion on the innovations and issues impacting cardiovascular care. The objective of the Heart & Stroke Innovation Forum was to spark ideas that would benefit the healthcare ecosystem and, ultimately, advance the mission of the American Heart Association. While the NYC event no longer exists, the AHA has since launched the Center for Health Technology and Innovation and a conference of its own, the AHA Health Tech & Innovation Forum, which is an invite-only event from Nancy Brown, CEO of the American Heart Association.

For anyone, men or women, interested in joining these efforts in NYC, Chelsea Beecher can be reached at [Chelsea.Beecher@heart.org](mailto:Chelsea.Beecher@heart.org). For more information on the Go Red for Women movement, please visit [goredforwomen.org](http://goredforwomen.org). ■



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