



**For Immediate Release:** 12.15.06

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### **Women's health program to teach heart-healthy lifestyle**

With more than eight million American women living with some form of heart disease, it is imperative that women of all ages learn how to live a heart-healthy life. Rush Oak Park Hospital and the Oak Park Department of Public Health have joined together to do just that with their *Heart Smart for Women* program.

A series of 12 classes, *Heart Smart* is designed to teach women the importance of a healthy lifestyle through good nutrition, exercise and stress management. The classes begin with an orientation on Wed., Jan. 10 in the North Conference Room of at Rush Oak Park Hospital, 520 S. Maple Ave., and will include a mini-cardiovascular risk assessment.

Heart Smart classes are offered at 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 10 and the following 12 Wednesdays thereafter in order to accommodate a variety of work schedules. The program is free if registrants complete eight of the 12 sessions. A \$20 initial fee will be refunded after successful completion of the program.

"*Heart Smart for Women* is an innovative, evidence-based program that uses behavioral modification techniques that truly help women attain healthier lifestyles," said Jackie Carlson, who not only leads Oak Park's *Heart Smart* but also owns Temple Fitness and is a personal trainer. "We make sure that the classes are fun and relevant to participants' lives. It's a great program because not only do you gain knowledge and techniques, you gain a lot of group support as well."

The main goal of *Heart Smart* is to teach women how to improve the health of their heart. All participants receive two mini-cardiovascular risk assessments, including cholesterol, glucose tolerance and body mass index (BMI) readings in order to better understand the present condition of their heart.

Long-time Oak Park resident Eleanor Strickland recently completed the 12-week course and has since made dramatic changes to her lifestyle.

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Heart Smart for Women  
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"I enjoyed learning about what to eat and how to read labels on foods," Strickland said. "I'm a diabetic so I knew some of the things that the class taught me, but *Heart Smart* definitely enhanced my knowledge and motivated me. I'm walking more, I've joined a health club and I would definitely recommend it for other people."

According to Oak Park Public Health Director Georgeen Polyak, PhD., the *Heart Smart for Women* program is a key priority for achieving the goals of the Health Department's recent *Mapping a Healthy Oak Park* (MHOP) plan.

"Not only does this program help women feel great and get in shape, it creates awareness of the importance of wellness and a healthy lifestyle, which is important to becoming a healthier community," Polyak said.

Registration for Heart Smart is required before the Jan. 10 deadline by calling 358.5490 or e-mailing [health@oak-park.us](mailto:health@oak-park.us).

Funding for this program is provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health, Rush Oak Park Hospital and the Oak Park Department of Public Health.

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