

HEART General Meeting Minutes 10/14/25

Addie Kaufman, Co-President, called the meeting to order at 12:05 pm. The meeting was held at The Meeting House in Oakland Mills. 112 members registered for today's luncheon, the first of the 2025-2026 year.

General Business and Committee Updates

Approval of May 13, 2025 General Meeting Minutes

Janet Zimmerman, Secretary, stated that the minutes of the meeting were published in the September newsletter. There were no questions or corrections. **Debra Deere** made a motion to approve the minutes; **Sue Anne Tabler** seconded the motion. Members voted and the minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Ellen Hill, Treasurer, reported the current balances: Checking \$37,057.91; Savings (other interest-bearing checking account) \$7,184.08; Scholarship (-\$5,421.22). Two scholarship checks have not yet been cashed and Ellen is pursuing this. HEART awarded 5 scholarships of \$1,500 each. Some checking account money will be transferred in the near future to subsidize scholarships.

Guest Speaker: Linda Penkala, LMT and Author of *The Pause to Relax, A Woman's Guide to Robust Heart Health*, presented information on health and wellness. She is a holistic wellness educator living in Columbia, Maryland. Based on her past experience, her goal is to offer hope, solutions, and encouragement for women. Cardiovascular disease is still the #1 life stealer, with younger lives lost. Linda stressed a quote from Andrew Freedman, M.D., Director of Cardiovascular Prevention and Wellness at the National Jewish Health in Denver, CO., "Despite excellent medical therapies, the most powerful of all treatments we have is LIFESTYLE. And we've paid lip service to lifestyle for decades." Chronic stress plays into heart health. It is important to know your numbers (cholesterol, triglyceride, blood pressure, blood sugar, BMI, etc.) and maintain a healthy weight (your BMI), etc. Assess your stress (awareness of anger, chronic negativity, unforgiveness, toxic relationships, work/life balance, the attitude of joy from the heart, caregiving of spouse). The heart sends more messages to the brain than the brain toward the heart; being more heart-intentional offers hope and light. Linda's message is to slow down to restore and relax. Linda suggested listening to soothing music such as *The River of Forever* to help relax: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QokVTU-2rA>). Other important points: friendship is very important to our overall health, our sense of smell affects our mood, eat and drink RED (tomatoes, beets, watermelons, etc.) for longevity and heart health, as well as embrace mindfulness, relaxing therapeutic massage, etc. Linda developed the PEBS acronym for woman's heart attack (**P** = Pain in neck, face, jaw, arm, or pressure; **E** = Exhaustion and fatigue totally unusual for you; **B** = Breath having a shortness, with possible lightheadedness; **S** = Sweating and nausea with stomach upset. Linda gives massages in Columbia in The Atholton Shopping Center (opposite end from Touche Touchet Bakery).

HEART's Website

Karyn Littlejohn is our new webmaster. Our redesigned website just launched. Karyn shared the changes and updates. Karyn did a tremendous job adding resources to the website. The website is open to everyone; it is no longer password protected.

Socializing with HEART

Sue Mascaro announced Performances at Toby's. Join HEART members for *Elf, the Musical* on December 4th and *Rock of Ages* on February 20th.

In addition, HEART is going back to the Strathmore on January 8th for *American Soundscapes: Jazz, Blues, and Beyond*. Listen to jazz, blues, and classical selections with the BSO and renown pianist *David Kaplan*. Contact Sue to reserve tickets for Toby's in Columbia and the BSO performances at the Strathmore in Bethesda by phone (443-878-6883) or by email, at scmascaro@gmail.com.

Scholarship Committee

A 50/50 raffle was held today to support the scholarship committee. \$192 was collected. Colleen DeJordy received \$96.00. Colleen returned some of her winnings back to the scholarship committee.

Serving the Community

HEART continues to sponsor *Comfort Cases* and the *Howard County Food Bank* with donations. Members donated generously to both organizations today. Today's economic world is difficult for many of our Howard County residents. Both organizations accept donations throughout the year. Comfort Cases provides a backpack with books, journals, pajamas, a stuffed animal friend, and other essentials for youth required to move to a foster home. Comfort Cases was founded to provide a more humane touch for the children as they transition to new foster placements.

Gene Streagle provided an update about health benefits. Jim Evans and Gene signed a non-disclosure agreement about negotiations. Oct 21 – Nov. 14 is Open Enrollment. The books are not yet printed. There will be 3 "Open Houses" Oct. 23, 29, and Nov. 4 that are held by calling the Board. The Open House is NOT in-person. If you are satisfied with your current plan, consider sticking with it. Our priority is to keep the benefits we have in spite of an increase in cost. There has been a 39.6% increase in prescription costs. We do not yet know the cost of the rate increase in our benefits but we will pay more. It is important to note HCPSS retirees have the best school system health care benefits in MD. For example, Carroll County has no health benefits for retirees. Gene recommends that members contact our Maryland legislators to maintain our pensions. Gene also pointed out our life insurance from Met Life remains one of our retiree benefits.

Retiree **Mark Blom** will be a member of the HCPSS Finance Committee.

Members thanked **Gail Zitney, Susan Sellner, Sharon Kramer, Bonnie Taylor, Ann Drnec, and Donna Brakens** for the success of today's luncheon.

Debra Deere - The Cross Country Garden Club will hold its annual Fresh Greens Sale on December 6 at the Gary J. Arthur Community Center's Holiday Mart.

Susan Sellner provided gifts to members attending for the first time.

Volunteer Opportunity – **John Dean** from Howard High School is looking for someone to judge student work in November and December.

Drawings

A drawing was held for members born in August, September, and October, and gifts provided.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Zimmerman, Secretary

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Visit our website at <https://howardrspa.org>.

Like us on Facebook: Search for HEART, *The Association of Retired Howard County Personnel*.

Annual Holiday Luncheon & General Meeting: December 9, 2025 at 12:00 pm at Turf Valley in Ellicott City