

**HeartCaring Case Study 2010  
Strengthen Community Relationships through HeartCaring**



Iredell Health System, Statesville, NC

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***Iredell Health System in Statesville, NC, is a Spirit Health Group® HeartCaring® designated hospital. This national designation for US hospitals and clinicians signifies excellence in gender-sensitive cardiovascular care as a strategy to foster long-term goodwill and community relationships while cross-promoting hospital services in a meaningful way.***

**What is HeartCaring?**

The national HeartCaring® program, developed in partnership with the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) *The Heart Truth*, is powered by Spirit Health Group® and activated by US hospitals that ascribe to the highest standards of excellence in women's health, education, and community outreach. HeartCaring is sponsored in part by The Bristol-Myers Squibb/Sanofi Pharmaceuticals Partnership and Philips Healthcare, with educational support from the Vascular Disease Foundation, the Peripheral Arterial Disease (P.A.D.) Coalition, and the Venous Disease Coalition.

**Problem/Challenge:**

Iredell Health System has the only interventional cardiology program in the region and is the only Stroke Certified hospital in the region. However, in a highly competitive market, coronary patients are often referred to hospitals in Charlotte or Winston-Salem.

**Objectives:**

- Strengthen Iredell Health System's regional reputation as a cardiovascular care leader and further differentiate it from its competition.
- Design a strategy to widely promote hospital services, specifically wellness initiatives, screenings, comprehensive diabetes program recognized by the ADA, and certified cardiac rehabilitation program.
- Issue a patient call-to-action and widely broadcast the importance of quickly acting on signs and symptoms, and to seek care immediately.
- Involve and engage community physicians in the HeartCaring messages and activities.
- Create a memorable and meaningful learning experience to empower women to own their heart health, and find joy and fulfillment in their relationships.

## Approach:

Inspired by the 5th Annual HeartCaring conference, the Vice President of Nursing developed a vision for a coordinated community education outreach program, which was collaboratively planned and executed by the Director of Planning and Community relations.

Iredell designed *Sisters @ Heart*, an innovative six-month educational program. Rather than a one-time session, Iredell created a series, which was launched in February 2010 during National Heart Health month. Participants commit to attending once per month. Topics build each month for this repeated audience in a dynamic and interactive setting. Each session addresses women's heart health and current recommendations while incorporating balance and emotional well-being.

## *Sisters @ Heart*

For consistency and easy access, meetings are 1 ½ hours long once per month and are held off-campus in a convenient location between neighboring towns. Attendance is free and dinner is provided by sponsors. After being marketed through newspaper ads, magazines, internet and hospital websites, email blasts, flyers, radio, and postcards, program sessions filled up immediately with 75 attendees, and a waiting list was started.

On the first night, attendees were given the opportunity to opt in or out of attending the rest of the sessions. Invitations were intergenerational to encourage women to attend with a friend or family member. Most attendees have been from 35 to 60 years of age. The series was scheduled on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month so meetings would not conflict with Wednesday evening church activities and to take advantage of the "weekend mentality" of the latter half of the work week. The monthly topics are as follows:



**"The Powerful Heart."** The importance of healthy weight through exercise and nutrition



**"The Connected Heart."** How confidence and self-esteem help build lasting relationships



**"The Joyful Heart."** Valuable tools for women to find joy in the every day things



**"The Flirtatious Heart."** How intimacy relates to an overall sense of well being



**"The Spiritual Heart."** The value of meditation and prayer in relation to heart health



**"The Mended Heart."** How women can live the very best lives regardless of past issues

Attendees receive a binder so that fact sheets, handouts, speaker bios, heart healthy recipes and hospital information can be inserted each month. Interactive HeartCaring worksheets, such as *Track Your Numbers for a Lifetime of Health*, *Signs and Symptoms*, *Finding the Roots of Better Health Today*, and the HeartCaring *Your Heart is in Your Hands* workbook are included, to personalize each attendee's experience.

The program itself is dynamic and interactive. Each session includes an educational cardiovascular PowerPoint presented by a physician and/or hospital staff experts. To broaden the appeal, outside experts in relationship management, organizing and balancing your life, humor, nurturing the spirit, sexuality, and hormones augment the message. The curriculum was built from HeartCaring educational modules and Spirit Monthly Health Promotions, such as *Don't Miss a Beat*, and archived Spirit PowerPoints, including *Balancing your Hormones*, *Balancing the Scale*, and *Balancing Life Stress*.

Creative Health-u-tainment™ elements are core to the program to keep it fun, such as a spoof of The Newlywed Game for Best Friends, Sudoku, and quizzes pre-printed on placemats. They are tailored to the evening's subject.

In addition to the binder and heart-healthy dinner, added incentives include a *Sisters @ Heart* tote bag and a heart-shaped puzzle-piece magnet with each of the themes represented. At each session they receive another piece of the puzzle to place on their refrigerator to remind them of what they are learning and as an incentive to complete the course.

Without being "commercial," Iredell takes the opportunity to educate the community about their providers and services, and how to access the hospital.

## **Outcomes/Results:**

To date, *Sisters @ Heart* has resulted in the following outcomes for Iredell Health System:

### Physician Engagement:

- *Sisters @ Heart* has had excellent cardiology support and involvement, including Dr. Ray Georgeson's, who has been a champion and presenter
- Ability to promote their designated HeartCaring physician, Dr. Young, in newspaper ads and in *Statesville Living Magazine*
- Physician satisfaction with the program

### Service Line Integration:

- Opportunity for various service lines to participate in the multidisciplinary effort

### Cost Savings/Efficiency:

- Because of the enthusiastic community response, local businesses have been enticed to provide sponsorships to cover the costs of the meal, (examples: a physician group, a financial advisor, a massage therapist, a photographer, and a local woman's magazine). St. Jude Medical provided funding to pay for educational materials.

- *Sisters @ Heart* requires minimal staff involvement because HeartCaring provides the materials, whether they are PowerPoint presentations, patient education materials, Consumer Workbooks, newsletters, etc.
- Instead of providing screenings on-site, participants receive free coupons to attend scheduled screenings
- Saved advertising dollars: canceled five months of planned advertising, valued at \$5,500
- Were able to attract national speakers and experts at no additional cost
- Utilized HeartCaring curriculum and fact sheet materials to save planning time

### Market Differentiation

- *Sisters @ Heart* provides the hospital with the opportunity to build relationships with attendees over a period of time, allowing for adequate follow up and information exchange.
- Evaluations are collected at the end of each session. The Hospital has the opportunity to change questions and query attendees about health decisions, intentions to make positive health changes, follow up with a provider, scheduling appointments, or how the program may influence their choice of Iredell for healthcare. They may also discuss topics for future program planning. For example, when asked, "Does your ob/gyn or family physician talk to you about the risk of heart disease and stroke?" 78% responded yes, 22% responded no; 62% of attendees have never seen a cardiologist.
- Patient satisfaction has been high.  
*Thanks for providing not only pertinent info but the opportunity to interact and learn.*  
*Excellent information and fun format. Thank you for dinner and the binder/tote. I look forward to the next meeting.*  
*Very enjoyable and educational. Can't wait for the next session.*  
*Thanks again for offering these sessions for free, for those who care about their heart and their life.*  
*I feel that I will walk away tonight with valuable information to help me begin a heart healthy life. Thanks to all for their part!*  
*I always learn something new and enjoy the time for sharing and fellowship.*

Iredell Health System recognizes the *Sisters @ Heart* initiative to be an effective community outreach program which has provided tangible ways to foster long-term relationships with consumers and community businesses. *Sisters @ Heart* has been an attention-getting way to strengthen Iredell's regional reputation and is a strategy to further expand the reach of its HeartCaring program.

A woman's heart  
has many facets.



Sisters at Heart is a free and informative seminar series that focuses on a variety of issues affecting your heart health. Bring a girl friend and learn how to care for your hearts in every way.



Sisters at Heart seminars are from 6 to 7:30 PM:



**February 18th - The Powerful Heart**  
Discuss the importance of healthy weight through exercise and nutrition.



**May 20th - The Flirtatious Heart**  
Address intimacy and how it relates to an overall sense of well being.



**March 18th - The Connected Heart**  
Discuss how confidence and self-esteem help build lasting relationships.



**June 17th - The Spiritual Heart**  
Discuss the value of meditation and prayer in relation to your heart health.



**April 15th - The Joyful Heart**  
Provide valuable tools for women to find joy in the every day things.



**July 15th - The Mended Heart**  
Help women live the very best life they can regardless of past issues.

Conveniently located to all of Iredell County at Little Joe's Chapel  
107 Barium Springs Dr., Troutman, NC 28010

*Attend all six seminars and receive a free gift card!*

For more information or to register, [click here](#) or call **704-878-7447**.