

From the *heart*



SPRING EDITION

COVER STORY

25 YEARS OF HEART:

One volunteer's
amazing impact

**A BREAKTHROUGH
IN BYPASS SURGERY:**

How silk could transform
cardiac surgery

PULL FOR THE HEART:

Tate's extraordinary tribute

Our hearts together



I'm delighted to welcome you to this edition of *From the Heart*. Reflecting on the year so far, I'm reminded that every action – no matter how big or small – can make a difference.

This edition celebrates the people and programs working hard to save hearts. In these pages, you'll meet Margaret, a volunteer who's been giving her time and talents to the Heart Foundation for 25 years. You'll read about Tate, who took on an extraordinary physical challenge to honour his mum and raise vital funds for heart research. And you'll discover the groundbreaking work of Professor Steven Wise, whose innovative research could change the future of cardiac surgery.

From our walking program and community fundraisers to life-changing research and stories of generosity – each page is a reminder that progress happens when we work together. And it all starts with supporters like you.

As we mark Include a Charity Week this September, we're also reminded how the choices we make today can leave a lasting legacy of better health for generations to come.

Thank you for being such an important part of our community. Every step forward, every breakthrough, and every story in this newsletter is made possible because of you.

David Lloyd
Chief Executive Officer
Heart Foundation

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A legacy for change

Helen's final gift is making a lasting impact on heart health

When Helen suffered a heart attack at just 55, it was a moment that changed everything for her. Thanks to quick thinking paramedics and a life-saving stent procedure, she survived – but her heart was never quite the same.



Helen

Over the next 27 years, Helen lived with chronic heart disease, managed a pacemaker and defibrillator, and faced ongoing respiratory conditions. But despite her health challenges, Helen never stopped giving back.

“She was incredibly grateful for the care she received,” says her daughter, Sami. “It made her realise just how important heart health is – and how vital the work of organisations like the Heart Foundation really is.”

She supported the Heart Foundation for decades – donating regularly, volunteering for door knock appeals and by leaving a gift in her will.

“She had a few organisations that were really important to her, and she supported them in every way she could,” Sami said. “It wasn't just about financial support – she gave her time and energy because she genuinely cared.”

Helen's final act of generosity will continue to make a difference. Her legacy is helping to fund life-saving heart research and support for families facing heart disease today.

“She would be pleased to know that she's still helping others, even now,” said Sami. “She didn't just care – she took action.”

Include a Charity week (2–8 September) is a special time to recognise the lasting difference that gifts in wills can make – and to celebrate all the ways people like you choose to support us.

To learn more about ways to support the Heart Foundation, and leaving a gift in your will, scan the QR code:



Pull for the heart

1,000 pull-ups in one day – Tate's extraordinary challenge to honour his mum



This year, Tate pushed himself to the limit in one of the most physically demanding challenges of his life, completing over 1,000 pull-ups in under eight hours. But this challenge wasn't just about how far he could push himself – it was about remembering his mum and raising awareness for a cause close to his heart.

A powerful tribute

In 2023, Tate lost his mum, Venessa, to an undetected heart condition. "I miss her more than anything. She was my biggest supporter," Tate shares. He remembers her as a loving mum, and someone who cared deeply and always opened her home to others. She was always a warm, welcoming presence in their community.

“Mum was always there. Whether it was a warm meal, a place to stay, or just someone to talk to, she showed up for people.”

In the days and months that followed her sudden passing, Tate turned to exercise to process his grief – first running, then eventually strength training through pull-ups.

“I got really into running, and it started to become a therapy for me. It helped me clear my head and figure things out.”

Over time, what began as small sets of pull-ups soon grew into 500 in a single session. Then came the idea for something bigger, and with the encouragement of friends and family, Tate decided on a new goal: 1,000 pull-ups in just eight hours, all while raising funds for the Heart Foundation.

The challenge of a lifetime

The challenge was as demanding as it was meaningful. Tate trained for months in the lead-up, testing his body – and his mindset – through countless repetitions. His strategy was to do five pull-ups every minute, giving himself a short break of 40 seconds before completing his next set.

On the big day, he set up at his local gym surrounded by friends, family and supporters from the community. The event was live-streamed, with raffle prizes, donations and plenty of encouragement from people to keep his momentum going. Even as fatigue set in, Tate kept pushing, drawing

strength from his purpose and the memory of his mum.

"I pushed myself to the limit and left nothing on the table. There were moments when I was in the hurt locker, but a couple of my mates jumped up to do a few reps with me to help me through."

After a long eight hours of relentless effort, Tate completed a staggering 1,302 pull-ups.

A lasting impact

Tate's incredible effort not only honoured his mum's memory – he also raised vital awareness and funds to support heart disease research, prevention and support.

“This was the hardest physical challenge I've ever done. I'm so grateful to everyone who came together to help with no thought of reward. They've given back to mum, and to me. I think she would be proud.”



Tate – in action



Tate exceeded his goal completing 1,302 pull-ups

A breakthrough in bypass surgery:

How a new silk-based material could transform cardiac surgery



Silk has long been a prized material – not just for its softness and strength, but also for its unique uses in medical settings. Now, this versatile natural fibre is being used in a bold new way: to help save hearts.

Bypass surgery: a life-saving procedure

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is one of the leading causes of death in Australia, responsible for nearly one in 10 of all deaths. It's often caused by blockages in the arteries that reduce or cut off blood flow to the heart – which can lead to heart attacks, long-term damage, or even death.

One of the most well-known treatments for CHD is coronary artery bypass graft surgery. In this procedure, surgeons take a healthy blood vessel from another part of the person's body – like the leg, arm or chest – and place it around the blockage. This creates a new route for blood to flow through to the heart.

Each year, over 12,000 Australians undergo this bypass surgery. It's an effective, life-saving operation.

But for some people – particularly older or high-risk individuals – it's not always possible to use their own blood vessels in bypass surgery. That's when surgeons turn to synthetic alternatives.

The challenge with synthetic grafts

Currently, most synthetic grafts are made from medical-grade plastics.

These grafts remain a necessary option for many people, but they aren't suitable for everybody. In smaller blood vessels – like those around the heart – synthetic grafts can have higher rates of complications than grafts made from a person's own tissue.

But despite these challenges, synthetic grafts remain the only option for some people. That's why a new approach is urgently needed.

An innovative alternative

In a world-first research project, Professor Steven Wise – a Heart Foundation Future Leader Fellow based at the University of Sydney – is working to develop a better alternative to existing synthetic grafts, using silk fibroin.

Silk fibroin is a protein – it's strong, flexible and biocompatible. In pre-clinical studies, Professor Wise and

his team have already found that silk-based grafts can outperform commercial plastics, especially in small-diameter vessels.

His team has also shown that the architecture of the silk – things like fibre width and pore size – plays a key role in how the graft behaves in the body.

"My project will determine the best combination of physical and biological properties for a graft. I'm aiming to provide a cell-free, off-the-shelf synthetic graft that could revolutionise the treatment of coronary and peripheral artery disease," explains Professor Wise.

"We've found that silk is a highly promising biomaterial. We can even improve its performance by adding molecules that could help reduce inflammation and promote healing."

Innovation made possible by you

Professor Wise's new alternative to traditional bypass surgery materials could change the way this common procedure is performed – and improve outcomes for people who need synthetic grafts.



Professor Steven Wise – Professor
of Cardiovascular Bioengineering,
University of Sydney

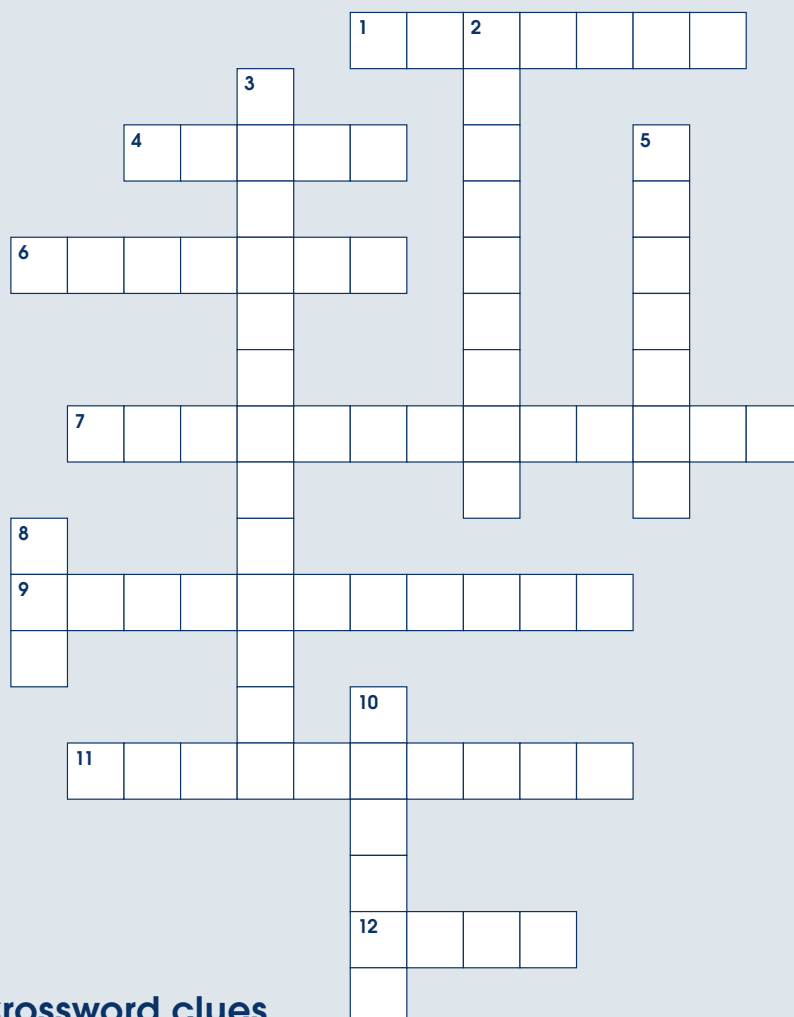
“I’m very grateful for the ongoing support of the Heart Foundation donors – it has played such a critical role in supporting my research. Our technology is moving out of the lab environment and further along the research pathway thanks to your generosity. I hope one day that we can move into clinical trials.”

Research like Professor Wise’s could help improve heart disease treatment – and it’s only possible thanks to incredible supporters like you.

PAUSE & PUZZLE

Strong hearts and healthy minds go hand in hand

Good heart health and mental wellbeing are closely connected – so take a moment for yourself and give your brain a healthy workout with a quick crossword puzzle.



Crossword clues

Across

- 1 This kind of exercise is great for heart health and requires no equipment
- 4 A Heart Health _____ can help you understand your risk of heart disease
- 6 Tate completed over 1,000 _____ in memory of his mum
- 7 A device that uses electricity to shock the heart back into a normal rhythm
- 9 Occurs when there is a blockage of blood flow to the heart muscle
- 11 Number of years that Margaret has been a volunteer
- 12 Professor Steven Wise is developing a new graft using _____

Down

- 2 Many cardiovascular disease risk factors are preventable through a healthy _____
- 3 CPR stands for Cardiopulmonary _____
- 5 The first week of September is Include a _____ week
- 8 The abbreviation for one of the leading causes of death in Australia
- 10 A type of surgery to treat blocked arteries

Answers:
Across: 1. Walking; 4. Check; 6. Pullups;
7. Defibrillator; 9. Heartattack; 11. Twentyfive;
12. Silk; Down: 2. Lifestyle; 3. Resuscitation;
5. Charity; 8. CHD; 10. Bypass

25 years of heart

Meet Margaret,
a dedicated volunteer
helping hearts for
over two decades



*Margaret speaking
at a memorial service*



*Margaret meeting the Hon.
David Hurley at Government
House, Sydney*



*Margaret attending a Heart
Foundation function at the
University of Technology, Sydney*

For 25 years, Margaret has generously given her time to volunteer at the Heart Foundation, lending a helping hand wherever she can. We caught up with Margaret to reflect on her remarkable service.

What inspired you to start volunteering with the Heart Foundation?

I had done some volunteer work when I was younger, and when my family came along, I became involved with various activities at the school – committees and carnivals, and helping in the canteen. After I retired from running my own business for 14 years, I wanted to give back, and volunteering for the Heart Foundation was a great opportunity to continue using my skills.

What kinds of things have you done in your time here?

Anything and everything to help get the job done! I've worked with all different teams – like the clinical, fundraising and walking program teams, just to name a few. I've participated in photoshoots, run stalls at events and have managed literature audits to help maintain the academic library. I really enjoy supporting the programs here however I can, and meeting with people in the Heart Foundation community – just anything that will benefit the community's health at large.

Are there any moments from the years that stand out to you?

There was one day in Martin Place, Sydney, at a fundraising event, when I met a father who was organising his son's funeral. His son had died of heart disease. We spent a long time talking. It was very emotional, but he thanked me so sincerely for being there to talk and support him in that moment. I'll never forget that day – it reminded me why our work is so important.

What keeps you coming back, year after year?

Heart Foundation is always very inclusive and appreciative. I always feel acknowledged for the work I do. The staff are very welcoming and caring too. I've even been to a few of their weddings! I feel really valued, and it's been a privilege to support work that genuinely helps people.

Why do you think volunteering matters?

I believe in the mission. Everyone has a role that plays into the bigger picture – if I can play even a small part in improving the community's health or helping a family feel supported, that's worth everything.

Thank you Margaret

Margaret's dedication over the past 25 years has made an amazing impact. Her passion, positivity and commitment inspire us every day – and we are so grateful to have her as part of the Heart Foundation community.

Stepping into spring

with Heart Foundation Walking

As the days get longer and the weather warms up, it's the perfect time to step outside and start moving more – and your heart will thank you for it.

Walking is one of the easiest ways to improve your heart health – just 30 minutes a day can help reduce your risk of heart disease, lower blood pressure, and support better mental wellbeing. It's free, generally low-impact and easy to build into your routine – whether it's a quick stroll after dinner or a lunchtime walk around the block.

Supporting healthy hearts, one step at a time

Heart Foundation Walking is one of Australia's largest free walking programs – helping people across the country move more, stay connected and look after their hearts.

Supported by health professionals, local councils and community leaders, the program is designed to help make walking easy, enjoyable and accessible for everyone. Research shows that when you exercise socially, you're more likely to stick to your routine – making it easier to build long-term healthy habits.

“My fitness level has improved, spurred on by the support of fellow walkers – it's great social contact and I've made many friends.”

Lucy, walker

Whether you like to walk alone, with friends, or as part of a group – there's a way for everyone to get involved:



Join a local walking group

There are over 750 walking groups across Australia. Visit our website to find one near you.



Start your own group

Want to lead your own group? We'll help you every step of the way.



Get a personal walking plan

Sign up for a free, six-week walking plan designed to help you reach your walking goals.

Did you know?

Walking as little as 30 minutes a day can help reduce your risk of heart disease.

Ready to take the first step?

Scan the QR code to visit our Walking website and get started today:





HEART-HEALTHY RECIPE

Gyros chicken bowls with sweet potato fries

👤 4 serves 🕒 25mins prep 🍳 25mins cook

Ingredients

600g chicken breast fillets, cut into 3cm pieces
2 cloves garlic, crushed
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon rind, plus
lemon wedges to serve
1 tablespoon dried oregano
2½ tablespoons olive oil
600g orange sweet potatoes, unpeeled
3 tomatoes, chopped
2 Lebanese cucumbers, chopped
1 small red onion, thinly sliced
¼ cup sliced kalamata olives
75g reduced fat feta cheese,
cut into 1cm cubes
1 baby Cos lettuce, leaves separated
½ cup tzatziki dip

Method

Step 1: Place chicken in a large bowl. Add garlic, lemon rind, 3 teaspoons oregano and 1½ tablespoons oil. Season with pepper. Toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate while preparing sweet potato fries.

Step 2: Cut sweet potato into approximately 10 cm-long x 1½ cm-thick fries. Pat dry with paper towel or a clean tea towel. Transfer to a large bowl. Add remaining oregano and oil. Season with pepper. Toss well to coat. Line a large baking tray with baking paper. Spread fries over prepared tray. Bake in a 220°C preheated oven for 20–25 minutes, until crisp and golden.

Step 3: Meanwhile, heat a large non-stick frying pan or barbecue over medium-high heat. Add chicken. Cook, turning occasionally, for 6–8 minutes, until golden brown and cooked through. Transfer to a plate, cover loosely with foil and rest for 5 minutes.

Step 4: Meanwhile, toss tomato, cucumber, onion, olives and feta in a bowl.

Step 5: Divide lettuce, tomato salad, chicken and fries among four wide, shallow bowls. Top with tzatziki. Serve with lemon wedges.



Check out our full collection of delicious heart-healthy recipes on our website. They're all designed to be tasty, easily fit into a heart-healthy eating pattern and offer inspiration for cooking meals at home. Scan here or visit heartfoundation.org.au/recipes. Enjoy!

Thank you

for giving hope to all those impacted
by heart disease in Australia