

## People With Heart Valve Disease Are Never Alone, Thanks To New Patient Ambassadors

(NAPSA)—Kimberly Goodloe can still recall the exact moment she knew something was wrong.

“I felt a sudden pain in my chest and knew I needed to see a doctor immediately,” she says.

Each year, millions of Americans are diagnosed with heart valve disease, a group of problems that people experience with heart valves, the gates that open and close so blood can circulate correctly into and out of the heart chambers. Heart valve disease can affect anyone but is more common



**Kimberly Goodloe recently joined the AHA’s Heart Valve Patient Ambassadors—a group of heart valve disease survivors and caregivers who volunteer to help others.**

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in older populations and people who have been diagnosed with other heart problems.

The American Heart Association (AHA) suggests people at risk should have regular doctor visits and understand the symptoms of heart valve disease, which include chest pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, dizziness or fainting, and swollen ankles, feet or abdomen. Following a proper diagnosis, treatment may include lifestyle changes, assessing the need for medication, and repairing or replacing the valve. Fortunately, with proper diagnosis and treatment, some people with heart valve disease don’t experience any problems and the condition mostly stays the same throughout their lives.

For others, the condition slowly worsens and, if not treated, heart valve disease can cause other life-threatening conditions.

“The healing process was hard, but it taught me the importance of a strong support group and how I could use my experience to help others,” Goodloe says.

Goodloe began volunteering with the AHA in 2010, and she recently joined the Heart Valve Patient Ambassadors—a small, volunteer-based group of heart valve disease survivors and caregivers who work with the AHA to raise awareness and support others. The program is supported by Edwards Lifesciences Foundation.

The AHA also offers a variety of resources at [www.heart.org/heartvalves](http://www.heart.org/heartvalves) to help patients and caregivers understand heart valve disease, and patients and caregivers can visit the Support Network to find and give support.