

# STATE & LOCAL

## This February, Love Your Heart (In Raleigh)

Meghan Grady, Staff Writer

Oh, it's February again, which means one thing...Valentine's Day. And in true fashion, shortly after the holiday season in December, we've been bombarded by hearts! They're everywhere- heart figurines, heart cards, heart shaped boxes filled with chocolates, and a personal favorite, those delectable Necco Sweethearts! But, during this Valentine's Day frenzy, it is important to remember our real, beating heart. According to the American Heart Association (AHA), February, 1963 was declared by Congress to be American Heart Month. Today, it is important to note that heart disease is the leading cause of death in women around the world. Across the nation, Americans are taking a closer look at how they treat this organ.

Whether or not you or someone in your family has experienced heart disease in the past or has never had any trouble at all, there are ways to keep your heart in tip-top shape. First, we've all heard the adage "you are what you eat." Thus, the AHA guidelines

recommend eating no more than 6 ounces of lean meat a day, which includes poultry, fish and beans. Also, recommended are about 8 to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables, 2 to 3 servings of low fat dairy, 6 or more servings of whole grains, and about 2 servings of fats and oils. They say to "boil, broil, grill, bake, roast, steam, stir-fry, or microwave, don't fry in oil." If you must use oil for cooking, give olive oil a try. Be sure to drink lots of water and cut back on the caffeine.

In addition to a healthy diet, it's time to get those sneakers out of the closet and get moving. Clicking the buttons on the TV remote control does not equal exercise folks! Exercise can help reduce stress levels by increasing endorphins. Endorphins are our friends! According to the Mayo Clinic staff, you should shoot for about 30-60 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. If you haven't done a lot of exercise recently, be sure to check with your physician and take it easy at the beginning. Try faking a walk on the Greenway with access at the front entrance of



A Heart, photo by Meghan Grady

Meredith's campus. By exercising, you'll work to maintain a healthy weight and combat stress.

And lastly, put that cigarette down! The nicotine in tobacco products actually makes your heart work harder by narrowing blood vessels. Quitting smoking can be a difficult task to accomplish. However, the rewards for the body and environment are monumental. For tips on how to improve your lifestyle, visit [goredforwomen.org](http://goredforwomen.org). They have lots of information including heart healthy recipes. You

can also sign up to receive their newsletter or join their "BetterU" lifestyle makeover program. In addition, Rex Hospital is hosting community events; visit their website for more information. Rex is also teaming up with the Carolina Hurricanes; you could enter their contest to win season tickets for next year! Go to: [www.carolinahurricanes.com/rexheart](http://www.carolinahurricanes.com/rexheart), and make this February a new start for your heart!

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herald@meredith.edu

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