

Chocolate, wine, heart health score big with crowd

Red-clad women get lessons in preventing coronary illnesses

BY ERIN NEGLEY
READING EAGLE

The rest of the country may have been going gold or seeing blue Sunday for the teams in the Super Bowl, but nearly 500 women painted the town red in Wyomissing.

The women — and some men — filled the Crowne Plaza Reading for Paint the Town Red, an event that Reading Hospital's Chest Pain Center billed as a date with your heart.

The women in red learned how they could boost their heart health with lifestyle changes, such as practicing yoga, drinking wine or reducing stress by keeping journals.

They snacked on dark chocolate and sipped sparkling wine. And they heard from experts about heart health.

The second annual event, which sold out, included 100 more people than last year's, said Diane Gallagher, assistant director of marketing at Reading Hospital.

"We decided to host something that was fun and entertaining while being educational," Gallagher said. "Because we know that heart disease actually kills more women than breast cancer,



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Sue H. Smith of Ruscombmanor Township, center, in red, and Sheila K. Violand of Exeter sample the chocolate fountain during the Paint the Town Red event hosted Sunday by Reading Hospital in the Crowne Plaza Reading hotel, Wyomissing.

yet we don't educate ourselves about what the risks are or what heart disease looks like."

Mary Ann Chelius Smith of Flying Hills came to the event after a friend encouraged her to attend. Chelius Smith has a stent in her heart and had a pacemaker implanted two weeks ago.

She said she enjoyed taking a low-impact exercise workshop, where she learned some new moves.

"I'm looking forward to hearing about how wine and

dark chocolate are good for you," Chelius Smith said.

Wine coach Laurie Forster led one session and showed about 120 women how to taste wine.

"Drinking is not thinking," she said. "When you're tasting wine, you need to slow down and use your senses."

Forster explained how and why she looks at the wine, and swirls, smells and tastes it. The group sampled a white wine — an Albarino — and a red wine — a Shiraz.

Red wine is healthier than

white because it has more tannins, which are antioxidants, Forster said.

She later led the larger group in a toast of their sparkling Moscato d'Asti. She urged them to not wait for anything, not to have any regrets and to enjoy the moment.

Dottie L. Smith and Wendy E. Cocci, both of Pottstown, clinked their glasses.

"I like this little speech," Cocci said. "Go for the gusto and follow your passion."

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Heart attacks in women

Women and men respond differently to a heart attack. Women are less likely to believe they're having one, making them more likely to delay seeking emergency treatment.

Women tend to be about 10 years older than men when they have a heart attack. They are more likely to have other conditions, such as diabetes, high blood pressure or congestive heart failure — making it all the more vital that they get proper treatment fast.

Women should learn heart attack warning signs:

- Pain or discomfort in the center of the chest. As with men, the most common symptom is chest pain or discomfort.

- Pain or discomfort in other areas of the upper body, including the arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach.

- Other symptoms, such as a shortness of breath, breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or light-headedness.

- Some of the other symptoms that are more common in women, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

Sources: The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute; National Institutes of Health