Health Advocate Irene Pollin Donates $10 Million to the Johns Hopkins Ciccarone Center for Prevention of Heart Disease

Her gift will launch transformative research and establish the Kenneth Jay Pollin Professorship in Cardiology

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Irene Pollin

Irene Pollin, a passionate health advocate and founder of a national organization devoted to heart disease prevention in women, has made a $10 million gift to the Ciccarone Center for the Prevention of Heart Disease. Her donation also establishes the Kenneth Jay Pollin Professorship in Cardiology and will launch pivotal research on heart disease prevention.

Pollin suffered the tragedy of losing not one, but two children, because of congenital heart defects. Her son, Kenneth, died when he was 13 months old. It is in his honor that the endowed professorship has been named. Her daughter, Linda, only lived to age 16.

Those experiences led Pollin, a psychotherapist with a master's degree in social work, to become a passionate and widely respected health advocate, especially for women, focused on the importance of heart health.

"If you're lucky to be born with a healthy heart, you need to take care of it, and there's a lot you can do," Ms. Pollin says. "I see this gift to the Ciccarone Center as a way to make a powerful impact on the knowledge and behavior of people to improve their health," she adds.

Her gift will enable the center to advance the field of prevention in many ways, according to Roger Blumenthal, M.D., professor of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and director of the Ciccarone Center, who has become the endowed Kenneth Jay Pollin Professor of Cardiology.

“Ms. Pollin’s extraordinary support will help us lead transformative work in the field of preventive cardiology. Her generosity will make it possible for us to better define risk factors and implement new ways to prevent heart attack and stroke,” Blumenthal says.

“Her gift will also allow us to provide advanced training to more of our postdoctoral cardiology fellows in cardiovascular epidemiology and clinical trial design at the Bloomberg School of Public Health,” he adds.
Pollin and Blumenthal were introduced by mutual friends in 2004 and, because of their common interest in heart disease prevention, especially for women, they worked together on research and outreach efforts over the years.

“Roger does incredible work on prevention. We are always in sync. The big issue is how do you get people to do what they need to do? They have to change behavior,” she says.

As a national expert on the development, treatment and prevention of heart disease, Blumenthal is co-editor-in-chief of the premier textbook in the field, *Preventive Cardiology: A Companion to Braunwald’s Heart Disease*, as well as the author of key articles on new and improved strategies to assess cardiovascular risk.

Blumenthal led formation of the Ciccarone Center for the Prevention of Heart Disease at Johns Hopkins in 1990. The center is named in honor of Henry Ciccarone, a legendary athlete and lacrosse coach at Johns Hopkins who died of sudden cardiac death at age 50.

The center has become one of the world’s premier clinical research centers for heart disease prevention. It has a three-fold mission — to provide excellent patient evaluation and care, to educate doctors and other health practitioners about how to better identify and care for those at risk of heart disease and to conduct rigorous research to advance the field.

In 2000, Pollin established Sister to Sister, an organization dedicated to educating and motivating women to make constructive lifestyle changes that can improve their heart health. At health fairs in Baltimore and more than 20 other cities, the organization has provided free evaluation, counseling and information to more than 80,000 women, making it the nation’s largest provider of free heart screenings for women.

Pollin, who lives in Bethesda, Md., is the author of two books and has earned numerous awards for her advocacy work. She and her late husband, Abe Pollin, who died in 2009, were the owners of the NBA’s Washington Wizards and the NHL’s Washington Capitals.

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The dedication of the Kenneth Jay Pollin Professorship in Cardiology and the installation of Roger Blumenthal as the inaugural recipient will be held on Friday, June 14, 2013, at 4:00 p.m.

For the Media

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