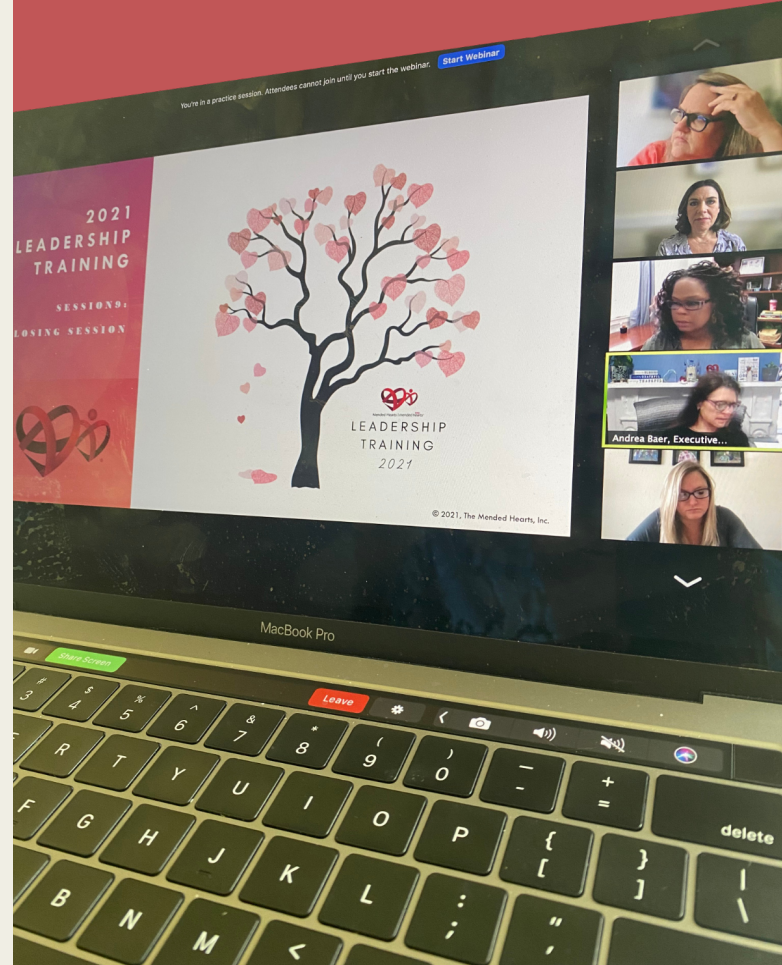
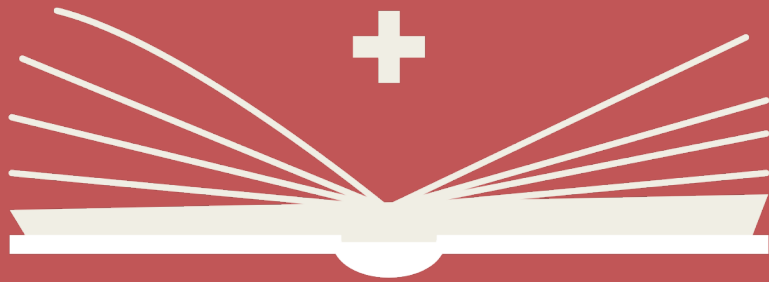


Health Literacy Education Goes National



by Jessica Daly, Consumer Health Librarian, The Clifford E. Grease Community Health Library of Orlando Health

Several years ago, I had the privilege of being introduced to an amazing and inspiring group of people who belong to a special organization called Mended Hearts. Since that time, I have been an honored guest presenter for meetings both in-person and, since COVID-19, through online virtual platforms sharing resources on a variety of health topics.

The Mended Hearts program is the nation's premier peer-support program for patients who have cardiovascular disease, their caregivers, and their families. Since its humble beginning in 1951, Mended Hearts has served millions by providing support and education, bringing awareness to issues facing those living with heart disease, and advocating to improve quality of life across the lifespan.

During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I kept in close contact with the local Orlando chapter and continued to present to them via Zoom. The meetings were always some of my favorites due to the participation and sincere interest of their members.

Earlier this year, I took the initiative to reach out to the national leadership of Mended Hearts, offering my online resources and virtual education sessions. After speaking with the Orlando chapter president as a reference, they watched a few of my recorded webinars, and held a Zoom meeting to talk. I was asked to present two live health literacy virtual sessions during their Mended Hearts National Leadership Conference in June of 2021.

My two 30-minute presentations were as follows:

Session #1 "COVID-19 - Reflections of the Heart"

- Fear of the Unknown
- Taking Precautions
- Vaccination
- A New Normal

Session #2 "The Heart of Self-Care"

- Defining Self-Care
- Risky Behaviors
- Benefits of Sleep
- Managing Stress, the Healthy Way



The Mended Hearts leadership team asked for my sessions to not only inform but encourage and inspire their chapter leaders to take care of their own personal physical and mental health. As leaders, they often ignore their own health and wellness due to being focused on the health of their members.

Since presenting these two sessions to the leadership and chapter leaders of Mended Hearts, I have been asked by chapter leaders across the country to present to their members on various health literacy topics. It is extremely exciting to present to cardiac patients from not only my own home state of Florida but chapters from as far away as California!

The most requested presentation has been "Becoming an Informed and Empowered Patient." This session gives patients free online resources they can utilize to become experts about their health and healthcare. My goal is for a patient to become an active participant within their healthcare team. If patients better understand their diagnosis, their medications, the risks, and benefits associated with their self-care, their health will improve along with their quality of life. I also cover things like how to prepare for a physician appointment or hospital stay, along with how to communicate with your physician.

Just a few weeks ago, I presented online to a chapter in Texas and met a member who turned 99 years old the day of my presentation. I am amazed at the reach this one initial connection has created for me to share and improve the health literacy of people I never dreamt of assisting!

I continue to be contacted by chapter presidents and collaborate with them to bring their members the best, most up-to-date health information available online for patients and family caregivers.

My advice for fellow librarians is to reach out to community organizations, clubs, churches, support groups, academic institutions, and even businesses to offer services and resources that only a librarian can offer. Though you may not hear back from everyone, the ones who do respond can make all the difference. Share the value of what you do and how your expertise can improve the lives of those living within the community you serve.

For more information and details feel free to contact me at Jessica.Daly@OrlandoHealth.com.

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