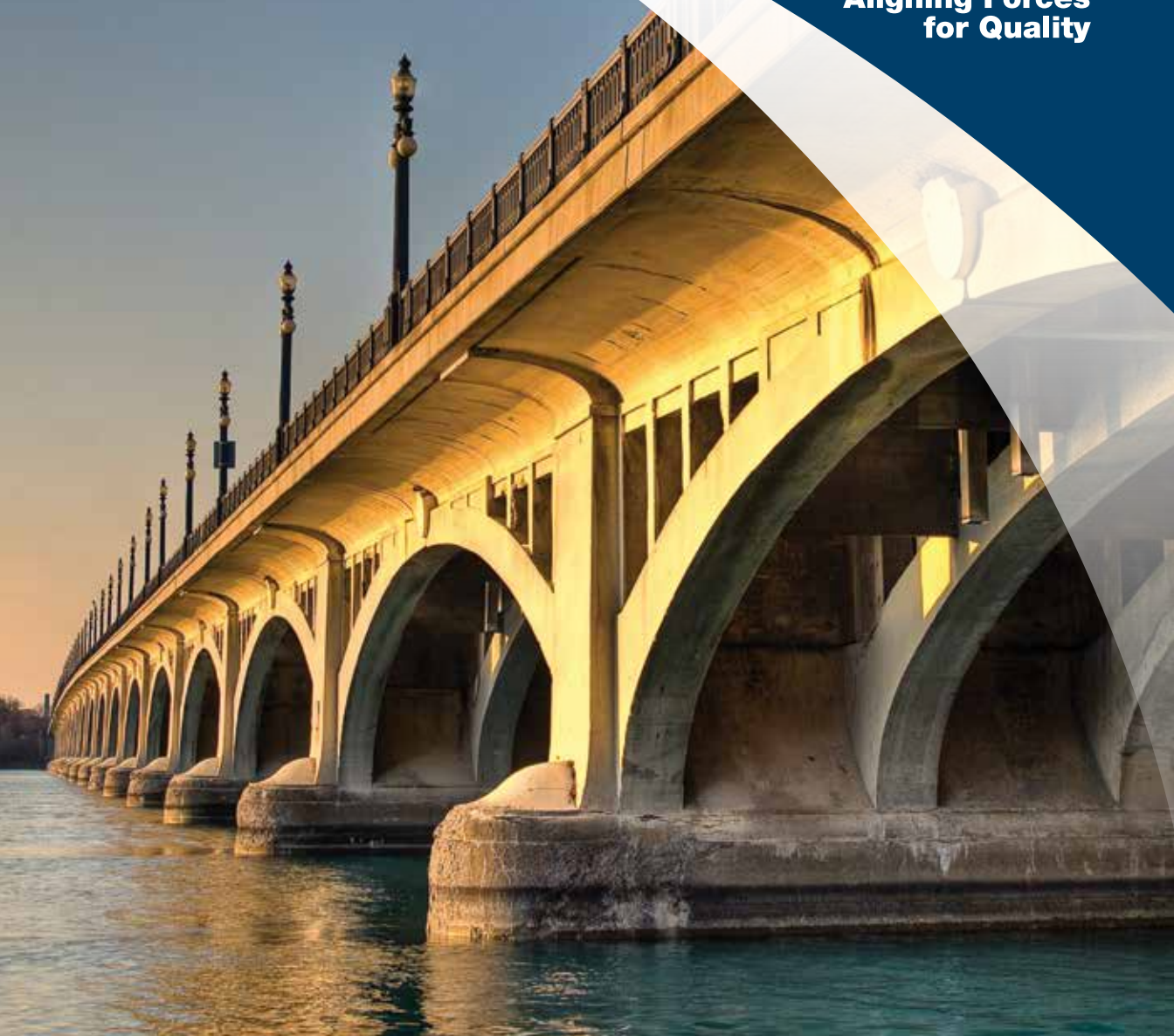




Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

**Aligning Forces  
for Quality**



# Detroit, MI

GETTING BACK TO THE BASICS  
TO PREVENT HEART DISEASE

**T**he Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q) initiative in Detroit is led by the Greater Detroit Area Health Council (GDAHC), a multi-stakeholder regional health coalition that has served the residents of seven counties in southeastern Michigan for more than 60 years. Members of this nonprofit community organization represent the region's major purchasers (corporations and labor organizations), health systems and health plans, insurers, government, universities, physician groups, consumer and community opinion leaders, as well as other health care organizations and associations. As the region's foremost health care coalition, GDAHC provides a forum for multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships to develop, facilitate, and execute promising solutions aimed at improving cost, quality, and access to care.



# Getting Back to the Basics to Prevent Heart Disease

"I knew I needed to make a change and be proactive in reducing my risk for heart disease. The exercise program helped me lose over 25 pounds, and my blood pressure is down to 112/65. The personal trainers were amazing. I have more energy than ever," said Gloria Kennedy.

Kennedy, 53, a Detroit resident and mother of two, is a testimonial to the importance of the Cardiac Disease Prevention Exercise Program led by the Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q) Detroit initiative, headed by the Greater Detroit Area Health Council (GDAHC). After a routine checkup, Kennedy discovered she was at risk for heart disease. With the help of the GDAHC exercise program, Kennedy is the healthiest she has ever been and has drastically reduced her risk factors. The personal trainers from the program helped Kennedy develop a routine that worked for her. She loves using the elliptical with other members of the program. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, and the Cardiac Disease Prevention Exercise Program helps participants like Kennedy reduce their risk factors for heart disease and improve their overall quality of life.

**"What we have here is such a jewel. The time and money spent on this program is priceless. It works, it really works."**

"What we have here is such a jewel. The time and money spent on this program is priceless. It works, it really works. I want to go out and

tell everyone how many lives can be saved by taking such simple steps. It's about getting back to basics, exercising, and eating right," said Kennedy.

**"The program brings the community together. The benefits will go beyond improving the quality of life for the patients, to reducing avoidable readmissions and medical expenses."**

The Cardiac Disease Prevention Exercise Program is completely free. Patients are given a six-month membership to Northwest Activity Center along with the complimentary services from a certified personalized trainer. Each participant is provided with a custom plan to most effectively reduce their risk factors for heart disease. Patients are also given a pedometer to track their steps, minutes walked, calories burned, and more.

To be eligible for the program, patients must identify with one or more risk factors: obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes or hypercholesterolemia, or family history of heart disease. Participants agree to attend six months of sessions to be held two times per week. They are also required to commit to at least one hour of exercise each week outside of the program. Additionally, patients must agree to participate in four educational sessions on topics such as diet and nutrition, stress management, and preventing cardiac disease.

The Cardiac Disease Prevention Exercise Program creates a partnership between patients and primary care practitioners (PCPs). PCPs must provide their patients with medical clearance, a medication list, a lipid profile, and a hemoglobin A1c test, a standard tool to determine blood sugar control for patients with diabetes. PCPs follow their patients throughout the program and evaluate them one month after completion. They are provided with a comprehensive pre- and post-program assessment.

“The program brings the community together. The benefits will go beyond improving the quality of life for the patients, to reducing avoidable readmissions and medical expenses,” said Lisa Mason, vice president of cost quality for GDAHC. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), coronary heart disease costs the United States \$108.9 billion each year. This total includes the cost of health care services, medications, and lost productivity.

Initial data for the program indicate a positive outlook. Participants are actively engaged and

already showing signs of reducing their risk factors for heart disease. Mason, through AF4Q, worked with the community to help develop the program and the Cardiac Disease Prevention Exercise Program Planning Team. Mason said the program is in phase one. In phase two, Mason, with the planning team, plans to develop a lasting model of the program that can be easily replicated across different communities. Evaluating the pre- and post-program data will help identify best practices for the framework of a sustainable system. “We’re going to create something where people don’t need a gym membership to make crucial lifestyle changes,” she said.

Each minute, someone in the United States dies from a heart disease—that’s one in every four deaths. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for people of most ethnic groups in the United States, including African Americans, Hispanics, and Caucasians (CDC). In Detroit, those at greater risk, like Gloria Kennedy, now have more than a fighting chance.

## GREATER DETROIT AREA HEALTH COUNCIL

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in Communities Across America