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Media Contact: David Bennett
760-940-7365

bennettdm@tcmc.com

Winning Attitude Earns Tri-City Medical Center Lucky 13 Participant Melissa Cappuccilli an American College of Cardiology Award

Melissa Cappuccilli completed a half marathon in January 2015, just 14 months after a heart transplant, and has since completed five more

OCEANSIDE, Calif.— The American College of Cardiology has chosen to honor Carlsbad resident and Tri-City Medical Center Lucky 13 alumni Melissa Cappuccilli for her “strength, positive attitude and inspiring story” with a national “I am CardioSmart” award.



On November 13, 2013, Cappuccilli received a heart transplant. Two months later, she volunteered with Donate Life at the Tri-City Medical Center Carlsbad Marathon and Half Marathon. Watching the runners inspired her to begin thinking about training for a half marathon herself. When she discovered the Tri-City Medical Center’s Lucky 13 program—a free marathon and half marathon training program for people overcoming health conditions--she knew that it was the program for her, especially since she had had her procedure on the 13th day of the 13th year and, according to her surgical team, hers was the 13th heart transplant they had performed that year.

Fourteen months after receiving a heart donated by a 19-year-old nursing student and at 51 years old, Cappuccilli was running her first half marathon.

“Melissa is an inspiration to each Lucky 13 participant. She continues to support the program coming out to our training runs, participating in the Carlsbad half marathon and encouraging all of her Lucky 13 alumni, peers and rookies,” said Paul Carey, Tri-City Wellness Center personal trainer and Lucky 13 program coordinator.

For her incredible strength, positive attitude and inspiring story, the American College of Cardiology chose Cappuccilli for their national “I am CardioSmart” contest, announcing her honor on February 22.

Cappuccilli had been told she could never do intense workouts due to her Arrhythmogenic Right Ventricular Dysplasia (ARVD), which was diagnosed during her 30s when she was a nurse serving in the U.S. Navy.

But in addition to completing her first half marathon in 2015, she is now training for her sixth.

“So happy to share my story to educate others on becoming CardioSmart! After my heart transplant, my Lucky 13 coaches and teammates assisted me in overcoming my health challenges and all of us finished a half marathon,” said Cappuccilli. The lessons I learned training for my first half marathon have carried over to a very active, healthy lifestyle, I am a Cardiac Athlete! I am confident, grateful, blessed and truly....Lucky.”

Cappuccilli exercises a minimum of three times each week for an hour, and tries to do some form of exercise every day, whether it’s a seven-minute high intensity interval training or a longer core workout.

Cappuccilli now works full time as a registered nurse and spends her free time volunteering for Donate Life America.

“People are amazed at what I can do with spare parts, so I challenge them.” Cappuccilli said. “Think about what you could accomplish with the original equipment, if you take care of it. It all starts with a positive attitude and a choice to begin each day with a grateful heart.”

To learn more about Cappuccilli’s story and the American College of Cardiology’s CardioSmart program, visit www.cardiosmart.org/Connect/Patient-Stories/Melissa-Cappuccilli



About Tri-City Medical Center

Tri-City Medical Center has served its community for over 50 years and is a 388-bed full service, acute-care hospital in Oceanside, Calif. with a primary care clinic and over 700 physicians practicing in 60 specialties. Its Gold Seal of Approval® from the Joint Commission recognizes its commitment to safe and effective patient care for the residents of the community it serves. It operates the only Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) in North County as well as an Orthopedic & Spine Institute, a Cardiovascular Health Institute and a Neuroscience Institute along with the Tri-City Wellness Center in Carlsbad, Calif., recognized as one of the best wellness centers in San Diego County. It also specializes in women’s health, robotic surgery,

cancer and emergency care. For more information about Tri-City Medical Center and Tri-City Healthcare District, please visit www.tricitymed.org.

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