As a volunteer firefighter for the Weir Fire Department in Texas, Lee knows how important training and education are for being prepared for duty. That became even more evident in 2016 when Lee received the HeartMate II™ LVAD after a sudden illness damaged his heart.

When he returned to work, Lee realized that his fellow first responders were unaware of the device that was keeping him alive. So, he developed an independent LVAD education course for first responders in July of 2017 and has worked with over 100 first responders in his area to date.

“My instruction style is like a ‘show-and-tell,’ I’ve got the equipment to show and can tell them how it works,” said Lee. “I provide an overview of the equipment, precautions, and discuss the common medications for LVAD recipients. It’s been very well received and I feel like I’m doing my part to educate and raise awareness.”

“It’s very important for the people who are responding to medical emergencies to know about LVADs ... and how to respond to a patient who may not have a pulse”

Like Lee, Charlie realized the importance of informing first responders in the communities where LVAD recipients reside. Shortly after receiving his HeartMate II LVAD in October 2013, Charlie reached out to the fire department in his town near Syracuse, New York.

“The first people I approached were the ones who saved my life after my heart attack,” said Charlie. He wanted to thank them, and show them what to do if they came upon a patient with an LVAD in the line of duty. To date, Charlie has informed 200 people, including first responders, the nursing department at a local hospital and the workers at his gym.

Charlie goes about his program in a similar way to Lee, also including a list of phone numbers to call in case of an emergency. The real hit of his presentation is letting people listen to the whirring sound of the equipment inside his chest with a stethoscope. “I’ll have a big line of folks waiting to hear it,” he said.

HeartMate 3™ LVAD recipient, Dan, and his wife, Linda, of Cleveland, Ohio, share Lee and Charlie’s enthusiasm for ensuring first responders know about LVADs. There have been occasions when Linda had to inform medical professionals about her husband’s LVAD. “It’s very important for the people who are responding to medical emergencies to know about LVADs, know the difference between them, and know how to respond to a patient who may not have a pulse,” said Linda.
Connecting with Others

**A NEW TYPE OF SUPPORT GROUP**

Typically, LVAD recipients attend support groups at their implanting center. For some, that's not possible for a variety of reasons, like moving or because their implanting center is too far away. The Shreveport area is home to many LVAD recipients who were implanted at centers from around Louisiana and Texas. One of those recipients, Carolyn H., a HeartMate™ LVAD Ambassador and LVAD therapy advocate, was instrumental in creating a new, regional support group.

This new group welcomes any LVAD recipient from the Shreveport area, regardless of where you were implanted. Because of this, they have great success building a community around the need for support. The group of patients who meet regularly in May, Carolyn and the group organized a crawfish boil (pictured at right) in a scenic location just outside of town, and plans for a pot luck celebration are underway for August.

“We just have a great time together. For the crawfish boil, everyone brought a dish and we were there for each other in a very beautiful environment with delicious food,” said Carolyn, who was unanimously selected as the group’s President.

**Ambassador Snapshot**

**WADE - SPREADING A MESSAGE OF POTENTIAL**

Wade has battled heart failure since birth, and learned at a young age to be his own advocate. In kindergarten, he showed the school nurse how to measure his heartbeat and blood pressure. As Wade recalls, he’s been talking to people about heart health his whole life.

In 2013, after more than a 50-year battle with heart problems, Wade received a HeartMate II™ LVAD. With that decision, a new life mission emerged. For the past five years Wade has been a volunteer with Donate Life, making weekly visits to hospitals, care centers and nursing homes, offering encouragement to those he meets, particularly those battling heart failure.

While he qualifies for a heart transplant, he’s opted against it. “The LVAD is working perfectly for me.” Wade’s most passionate talks are about “potential.” He says, “With an LVAD you can travel, spend time with your kids, explore what the universe has in store for you. The HeartMate LVAD can open up a whole new world, like it has for me.”

Wade estimates that he sees about 20 people a week, which means in the five years since receiving the HeartMate II LVAD, he’s shared his message of potential with thousands of people. Realizing one’s potential is a great message for anyone and according to Wade, it’s even more poignant when you’ve been given a new chance at life with a HeartMate LVAD.

If you or someone in your LVAD community is doing something great – we want to hear about it. Email HeartMateAmbassador@sjm.com to share it in this newsletter.

**Getting Outside**

**STAYING SUN SAFE THIS SUMMER**

For some, summer has taken a long time to arrive and now that it has, we’re eager to get outside and enjoy it. For others, summer is a time of extreme heat, keeping us inside more often. No matter where you live, keep the following safety tips in mind, and stay safe this summer:

1. **Mind Your Equipment.** Keep your batteries indoors in moderate temperatures. Storing batteries in a hot car or car trunk, will shorten their life.

2. **Drink Water.** Proper hydration is essential for our overall health. It plays an important role in blood pressure, regulates body temperature, lubricates joints, moves waste out of the body, and aids in digestion.

3. **Better Choices on the Grill.** Choose heart healthy protein options such as fish high in omega-3 fatty acids. If you’re having a burger, buy extra lean beef. Load up your kabobs with vegetables, and avoid salty foods and snacks.

4. **Power.** Blackouts can happen in summer and the first thing to remember is to stay calm. Power modes can provide up to 30 minutes of back-up power but you should get a battery support right away. Fully charged batteries for HeartMate 3™ LVAD last up to 17 hours and up to 12 hours for the HeartMate II™ LVAD. Remember to always carry an extra set of charged batteries and have the battery charger plugged in. Most local fire departments have back-up generators, so you can go there for help if needed. Check in with your implanting center with any questions or concerns.

5. **Sun & Heat.** Wear wide brimmed hats, sunglasses, and apply at least 15 SPF sunscreen every two hours. Wear lightweight, light colored clothing in breathable fabrics.

Steven T. Kellie, FNP, Nurse Practitioner and Area Specialist for HeartWare, a Medtronic Company, is leading the LVAD Support Group. We spoke with Steven about the group’s mission.

Steven explains that the group’s mission is to meet with heart failure patients in the area who are considering an LVAD. The group is also busy planning a birthday celebration to commemorate one of their fellow Ambassador’s 10 years of HeartMate II™ LVAD support in October. Added Carolyn: “This absolutely deserves a party!”

Steven also talks about the importance of support groups for LVAD recipients. He explains that support groups are designed to help recipients feel less alone, help them find friends, and help them feel like they have support.

**Nutrition Tips**

**EATING OUT HEARTWISE**

If you are trying to live a Heart Healthy lifestyle and are limiting or avoiding salt and fat, these suggestions from the American Association of Heart Failure Nurses (AAHFN) are for you! It’s possible to enjoy going out to eat without fear of becoming ill by following these recommendations:

**“CHAIN” RESTAURANTS**

1. **Go to the restaurant’s website and search for nutrition information.** You will find food label information for specific items on the menu, such as fat and sodium. Or when you arrive, ask the restaurant manager for the nutrition guide.

2. **Avoid or limit buffet-type restaurants.** Most people find it difficult to limit portions at a buffet. Remember, the more you eat, the more salt, calories and fat you consume.

*Excerpted from the AAHFN Patient Education website. For the complete Eating Out Heartwise tips, more ideas on low sodium eating and other living with heart failure tips, visit: https://www.ahahn.org/page/patiented*
Individual Experience: Each testimonial relates an account of an individual’s response to the treatment. The patient's account is genuine, typical and documented. However, it does not provide any indication, guide, warranty or guarantee as to the response other persons may have to the treatment. Responses to the treatment discussed can and do vary and are specific to the individual patient. See Important Safety Information referenced within.

Important Safety Information

Rx Only

Brief Summary: Prior to using these devices, please review the User's Manual for a complete listing of indications, contraindications, warnings, precautions, potential adverse events and directions for use.

HeartMate 3 LVAS Indications: The HeartMate 3™ Left Ventricular Assist System is indicated for providing short-term hemodynamic support (e.g. bridge to transplant or bridge to myocardial recovery) in patients with advanced refractory left ventricular heart failure.

HeartMate II LVAS Indications: The HeartMate II™ Left Ventricular Assist System is indicated for use as a “bridge to transplantation” for cardiac transplant candidates who are at risk of imminent death from non-reversible left ventricle failure. It is also indicated for use in patients with New York Heart Association (NYHA) Class IIIB or IV end-stage left ventricular failure, who have received optimal medical therapy for at least 45 of the last 60 days, and who are not candidates for cardiac transplantation. The HeartMate II Left Ventricular Assist System is intended for use both inside and outside of the hospital, or for transportation of Left Ventricular Assist Device patients via ground ambulance, airplane, or helicopter.

HeartMate 3 and HeartMate II LVAS Contraindications: The HeartMate 3 and HeartMate II Left Ventricular Assist Systems are contraindicated for patients who cannot tolerate, or who are allergic to, anticoagulation therapy.

HeartMate 3 and HeartMate II LVAS Adverse Events: Adverse events that may be associated with the use of the HeartMate 3 or HeartMate II Left Ventricular Assist System are listed below: death, bleeding, cardiac arrhythmia, localized infection, right heart failure, respiratory failure, device malfunctions, driveline infection, renal dysfunction, sepsis, stroke, other neurological event (not stroke-related), hepatic dysfunction, psychiatric episode, venous thromboembolism, hypertension, arterial non-central nervous system (CNS), thromboembolism, pericardial fluid collection, pump pocket or pseudo pocket infection, myocardial infarction, wound dehiscence, hemolysis (not associated with suspected device thrombosis) and possible pump thrombosis.

Please refer to the User's Manual for detailed indications, contraindications, warnings, precautions and potential adverse events.