



Charlie Crist
Governor

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State Surgeon General

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LEON COUNTY NURSE SENDS WOMAN TO EMERGENCY ROOM JUST IN TIME

TALLAHASSEE – Public health professionals often encounter individuals who are so busy helping others that they neglect themselves, causing serious health consequences. Women, in particular, often fail to seek important preventive care and treatment as they manage their many responsibilities as wives, mothers, daughters, sisters, employees and volunteers. Kathy Lewis, R.N., from Leon County's Office of Minority Health, remembers one such patient: Eartha Webster, a woman who greatly improved the lives of children at a nearby housing complex.

On February 25, 2009, the Leon County Health Department's Mobile Health Unit set up its clinic on Texas Street, a neighborhood with health access challenges. As usual, the clinic was extremely busy. Many clients requested blood pressure checks for hypertension, blood glucose checks for diabetes, HIV/STD testing for sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy tests, and body mass index (BMI) calculations, among others.

During her packed Wednesday schedule, Kathy Lewis received a client who was anxious to see her. Nurse Lewis opened the door and saw the familiar face of Eartha Webster. Ms. Webster said, "Ms. Lewis, I feel really bad. My ears are ringing, and I feel light headed and dizzy. My left arm has also been aching."

After Nurse Lewis discovered that Ms. Webster's blood pressure was dangerously high, she informed Ms. Webster that immediate medical attention was necessary. In fact, her blood pressure was at stroke level, and she could have had a stroke or a heart attack at any time. "I told her that if she did not take care of herself, she would not be able to take care of the children who needed her," said Kathy Lewis.

On March 4, Nurse Lewis received a voice message: "Ms. Lewis, this is Eartha Webster. I wanted to call and thank you for telling me that I needed to be checked out right away. After you saw me, I spent four days in the hospital. I am so glad that you and the Mobile Health Unit were here when I needed you. I am so grateful for you and for Leon County Health Department. You saved my life."

Kathy Lewis believes that helping those who help others is one of the most rewarding aspects of working in public health. Ms. Webster has now changed her focus to take care of herself first so that she can continue to make a difference in the lives of the neighborhood children as they grow into adulthood.

National Women's Health Week is May 10-16. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health chose this year's theme as "It's Your Time," to empower women to make their health a top priority. The nationwide initiative encourages women to take simple steps for a longer, healthier and happier life, including:



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- **Exercise:** Getting at least 2 ½ hours of moderate physical activity, 1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity or a combination of both each week
- **Nutrition:** Eating a nutritious diet
- **Checkups:** Visiting a health care professional to receive regular checkups and preventive screenings
- **Risky behaviors:** Avoiding smoking and always using a seatbelt
- **Mental health:** Paying attention to mental health, including getting enough sleep and managing stress

DOH promotes, protects and improves the health of all people in Florida. For more information about the Leon County Health Department, call (850) 606-8153 or visit www.leoncountyfl.gov/lchd/.

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