

Valerie Greene, feeling weak and dizzy, went to the emergency room. After an examination, the doctors sent her home.

Ten days later, she returned with slurred speech and weakness on one side of her body. Emergency room staff

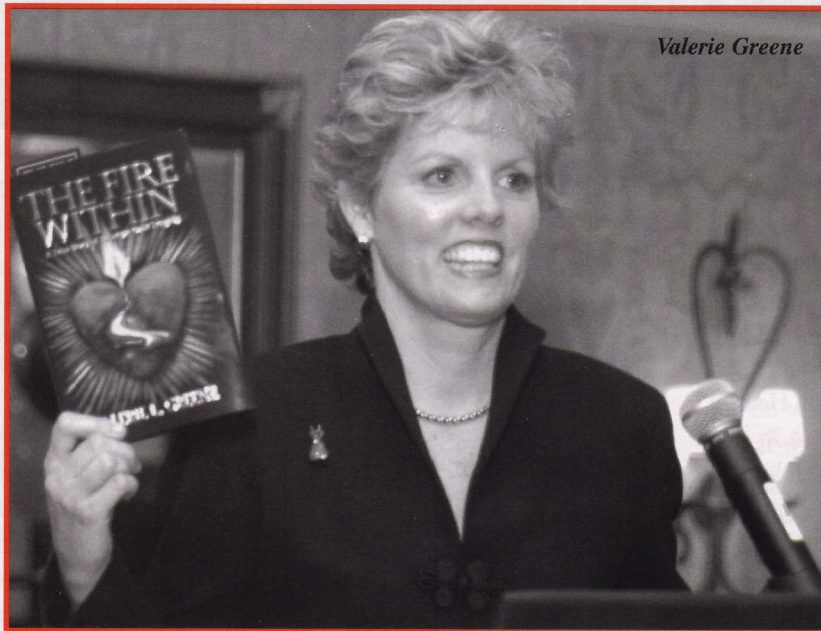
Neurologists thought she was too young to have a stroke. An angiogram proved them wrong. Valerie had suffered a massive ischemic stroke — at age 32.

The once successful estate planner and triathlete struggled to speak and move. She had to let go of her past identity and embrace the new life stroke had pushed her into. In the hospital rehabilitation program she had to re-learn everything. Like a small child, she worked at crawling. She learned to speak her first words — again — one sound, one syllable, at a time.

A month later she returned home from the hospital, not walking triumphantly through the door, not even entering with a determined limp, but being pushed in a wheelchair. A 24-hour nurse had to help her with the most basic tasks. She became depressed and lonely, but she finally said to herself, “I’m in charge here, not this depression. I’m taking control.” She promised God if He would give her voice back, she would never shut up.

Two months later, after undergoing experimental treatments and grueling rehabilitation,

Valerie was walking with a cane and speaking in full sentences.



Valerie Greene

The Road To Recovery Started With One Syllable

didn't even consider her symptoms stroke—related. The MRI machine was down for repairs. The CT scan was normal. While doctors tried to figure out what was wrong with her, Valerie suffered a massive stroke.

Thirty-six hours later, she woke up in the ICU, paralyzed on her left side. She couldn't speak and was deaf in her left ear.

tences. She continued with extensive aquatic, physical and speech therapy three times a week.

Seven years after her stroke, Valerie kept her promise to God. She became a volunteer for the American Stroke Association, a division of the American Heart Association, with the seemingly simple act of speaking.

After her first speech, people told her she inspired them

Continued, see “The Road” on next page

Volume 15

Summer 2004

Inside HeartStyle

heartStyle

L e a r n a n d L i v e
through research, education, awareness and community outreach

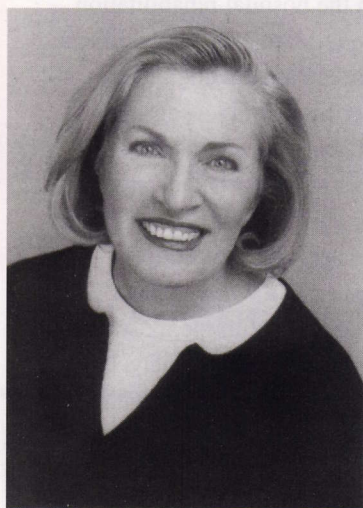
© 2004 American Heart Association

- Ph.D. learns a healthy lesson
- Taking stress to heart
- Adding dairy can cut body fat
- Charitable gift annuities
- American Stroke Association PSA campaign
- Jump up and celebrate
- New Learn and Live Quiz
- Get organized and Go Red For Women

Ph.D. Learns a Lesson on Healthy Habits for Life

In 1995, while Mary McLaughlin of Syracuse, N.Y., was pursuing a Ph.D., her life became so busy she no longer had time to exercise or eat nutritiously. As a scientist and president of Emotional Education Services, LLC, she was developing programs, taking business courses and spending most of her days seated at work.

"I ate whatever was available. I ate more, because I thought the food would give me more energy, but I just started to gain a lot of weight," McLaughlin said.



Mary McLaughlin

Her family history of heart disease made her want her pre-Ph.D. lifestyle back, when she was less busy and more athletic.

In 2003, she responded by joining the American Heart Association's **Choose To Move** program. The free, 12-week program, developed by Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research in Dallas and sponsored by the Almond Board of California, is available online or by mail. It offers simple, ongoing techniques that teach women how to incorporate exercise and healthy eating into their lifestyle.

When you join, you receive:

- A handbook to help you increase physical activity
- Nutrition tips and recipes for healthy eating
- Weight management tips, including success stories and information through e-newsletters
- Relevant facts on heart disease and stroke

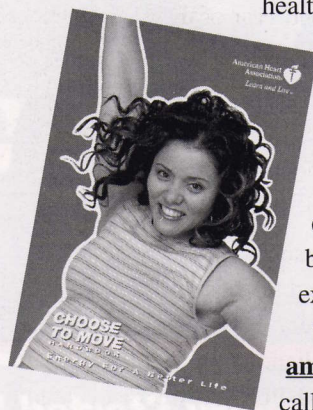
Choose To Move taught Mary how to fit physical activity into her busy schedule and make healthier food choices. She walks at lunch or after work most days of the week. On weekends, she spends time at the grocery store choosing healthy foods for weekday meals.

"It's working for me," McLaughlin said. "Since I've been participating in **Choose To Move**, I've developed a great interest in eating healthfully. I cook healthier at home and choose

healthy snack items. Instead of going to

the vending machines at work, I snack on a small sandwich bag of almonds and if I have to eat fast foods, I choose the healthiest meals, like low-fat yogurt and grilled chicken without mayonnaise. I feel much better now that I'm eating better and exercising."

To register for **Choose To Move**, visit americanheart.org/choosetomove or call 1-888-MY-HEART. ❤️



The Road To Recovery

Continued from cover

to join Train To End Stroke, a marathon-training program that helps raise funds for stroke research. "That was so encouraging," she said.

Valerie hasn't stopped talking since!

She has participated in advocacy efforts, speaking to politicians to support bills that fund stroke research, care and educational programs. She speaks at stroke events that educate survivors and their caregivers, Train To End Stroke information sessions and educational stroke events for hospitals and other groups. She also gives radio and television interviews to educate people on stroke.

Valerie finds it ironic that a woman with a speech impediment is making a career out of speaking to others — for others.

Her talking has turned into walking. This January she completed the half-marathon in the Disney Marathon, raising over \$11,000. The marathon training did more than help fund stroke research. It improved Valerie's walking ability and strengthened her body enough to jog in place for the first time since having

her stroke, which proved helpful the day of the race.

Valerie was determined to make it to the finish line. Walkers must finish each mile in 16 minutes or be "swept" out of the race because they won't finish in time. On the sixth mile she saw the sweepers coming for her. But she wasn't going to let them take her out of the race without a fight, so she started jogging. She kept jogging until she crossed the finish line.

"My stroke lit a fire within me," Greene said. "I knew I wanted to help other survivors and to fight stroke any way I could."

Valerie shares her personal story of passion in her book, "The Fire Within," about her journey through recovery. Twenty percent of the proceeds from the sale of the book will help support the American Stroke Association. The book is available at www.thefirewithin.net and select stores.

Would you like to make a difference and volunteer? You don't have to be a heart attack or stroke survivor — just willing to fight cardiovascular disease. Call your local American Heart Association office or 1-800-AHA-USA1 for more information. ❤️