

MyHealthy Decisions

Listen to your heart

“I believe sometimes we think we are invincible, but in reality we are quite fragile in the whole scheme of things,” says Marge Miller, who underwent heart surgery for blocked arteries and a life-threatening aneurysm. “Now what I would say to other women is: Don’t be in denial. It can kill you. You know your body better than anyone else—pay attention to any regular abnormal signs, no matter how small.”

In 2014, Miller, a longtime respiratory therapist, had been experiencing fatigue and shortness of breath for some weeks. Then, after walking up a hill going into work, she had a brief “finger-poking” sensation in her mid-chest area. “I attributed all these symptoms to being overweight, holiday overindulgence, a lack of exercise and getting older. And I had no pain at all,” Miller says. “But, when your colleagues say you don’t look good, take it to heart—literally—it might save your life.”

TAKE SYMPTOMS SERIOUSLY

“I came to work that Thursday morning, expecting to go home like any other workday,” says Miller, who lives in Warren, near Richfield Springs. At her co-workers’ strong urging—because she didn’t look or feel good—Miller made an acute appointment with her primary care provider, who, after performing

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HEART CARE ISSUE

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an electrocardiogram, sent her to the emergency department (ED). After a consult with Bassett cardiologist Vivian Clark, MD, in the ED, a cardiac catheterization was ordered. Dhananjai Menzies, MD, an interventional cardiologist at Bassett Healthcare Network, performed the procedure. “He spoke with me and put my mind at ease,” says Miller. “We also joked as to why I was on that side of the table.”

Miller is known for being the one taking care of others on the job and at home. In addition to her work as a respiratory therapist, she is a certified critical care EMT, a CPR instructor and a member of the Springfield

Fire Department. She is also very involved with her family’s organic dairy farm and with looking after members of her extended family.

LIFE-IMPROVING SURGERY

During the catheterization, Dr. Menzies noted two vessels blocked at about 65 percent and an alarming, nearly 100 percent blocked aneurysm on the left anterior descending coronary artery—aptly called the widowmaker. Arrangements were made to have John Kelley, MD, Bassett’s chief of cardiac surgery, perform a triple coronary artery bypass graft, or CABG, right away. The surgery and recovery went smoothly.



HEART DISEASE

affects men and women equally, yet the early warning signs can be different for women.

To view video, go to

bassett.org/heart-disease-women.

“Sometimes the most subtle symptoms, like fatigue or shortness of breath, should not be ignored, as they can indicate a life-threatening condition,” says Dr. Menzies. “Fortunately, in Marge’s case, she took action and was able to have life-improving surgery.”

“I followed all instructions exactly as directed, completed cardiac rehab and have done quite well,” says Miller. “Since surgery, I have tried to watch my weight and eat more vegetables—organic whenever possible—and exercise at least three times a week.

“I have many irons in the fire in my life, and resting was never an option until my work was done. Since this life-altering experience, I have readjusted my expectations. I now rest in between my jobs at home. I stop and smell the roses as they say. Family has become more important to me. I am looking at life differently now. Most importantly, my advice to others is to pay attention and don’t ignore symptoms; they could be early warning signs of something more serious.

“Dr. Menzies and Dr. Kelley are amazing. I cannot begin to tell them how thankful I am that I am here today.”




Marge Miller makes time to take care of herself.

BASSETT HEART CARE INSTITUTE offers comprehensive heart care services throughout Bassett Healthcare Network. For more information, visit bassett.org/heart or call **800-BASSETT (800-227-7388)**.



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