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## Mid-Atlantic Affiliate 2007 State Advocates of the Year



The Mid-Atlantic Affiliate is pleased to announce our State Advocates of the Year. This year we have quite an impressive group of individuals that are active advocates that have used their voices to influence public policy and have encouraged others to become members of *You're the Cure*. Through passion and commitment, they have inspired others to take action and helped improve the health, well-being and quality of life for people in their community,

state, and nation.

The AHA/ASA appreciates all that they have done, from responding quickly to action alerts, serving on state public policy committees, meeting with legislators, speaking to the media, testifying at legislative hearings, writing/signing letters to the editor and opinion editorials, and attending rallies and lobby days.

We extend to all our *You're the Cure* members our sincere gratitude for your commitment to helping us move forward our mission to build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

### Meet our State Advocates of the Year

*Susan Emery*  
Maryland Advocate of the Year



Susan Emery has been a member of *You're the Cure* for over three years. She currently serves on the Maryland Advocacy Committee and is the President of the Montgomery County Stroke Association, a 600-member organization serving the needs of stroke survivors and caregivers through monthly support groups and educational programs. Recently, Susan established a non-profit organization to improve the quality of life for those affected by stroke and other

disabling conditions. Susan is a young stroke survivor, having suffered a stroke when she was only nine years old. Now an adult, Susan is a passionate advocate for improving stroke care.

Susan has attended AHA spokespersons training with our federal advocacy team and has used that training to help her become a more effective advocate. She has testified in front of a Congressional sub-committee focused on stroke policy. As an active member of the Montgomery County Stroke Association, she champions stroke issues within her own community and is currently working with the Maryland Stroke Alliance to improve stroke care throughout Maryland.

During the Smokefree Maryland campaign, Susan was a willing advocate, sending letters that address the need for smoke-free public places to protect Marylanders from the dangers of secondhand smoke. Susan has presented testimony on therapeutic recreation to several Montgomery County commissions and has expressed her willingness to support efforts that will bring quality physical education to Maryland's schools. She answered our call for volunteers to help with the "I Vote With My Heart

Print Email

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### RELATED ITEMS

- Links to Other Sites
- [SC Are You Covered Photos](#)
  - [SC Are You Covered Calendar of Events](#)
  - [Smokefree Mecklenburg](#)
  - [Stroke Comeback Center](#)
  - [Montgomery County Stroke Association](#)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Heart attacks and strokes can occur suddenly, but several warning signs can help you respond quickly and effectively. Every second counts when it comes to saving a life.  
[read more...](#)



Are you a heart disease or stroke survivor? Do you have a family member who is? [Tell us your story.](#)



**Enroll in You're the Cure**  
You don't have to be a doctor to save lives. Just be willing to deliver a lifesaving message to public officials whenever you can. That's why **You're the Cure**, a nationwide network of people dedicated to finding a cure for heart disease and

Campaign" at Heart Walks in Baltimore and Washington, DC. Recognizing the need for *You're the Cure* to grow in numbers, when she speaks to a new group or attends an event she thinks about asking those individuals to join our advocacy network. Congratulations Susan and thank you for being a devoted *You're the Cure* member.

stroke, needs your talent and time — now! [Enroll in the \*You're the Cure\* network today.](#)

*Paul Berger*  
Virginia Advocate of the Year



Paul Berger is a long-time advocate and volunteer for the AHA/ASA. He currently serves on the Virginia Advocacy Committee. As a stroke survivor, he has a passion for improving stroke care and raising awareness about stroke within his community, state and nation. Paul has attended the Congressional Heart and Stroke Lobby Day more than 5 times and regularly attends the annual Virginia "Here's to Your Health" Legislative Reception and *You're the Cure*

at the Capitol.

In his local community, Paul was one of the driving forces behind the Virginia Stroke Comeback Center. The Comeback Center, just as the name implies, is a place to help stroke survivors come back after stroke. Paul has invited policy makers to tour the facility and educate them about stroke. In addition, Paul produces a monthly newsletter to help stroke survivors by providing them with new information and inspiration to know that there is life after stroke.

This year, he readily agreed to serve on the Virginia State Stroke Task Force, which is working to make recommendations concerning stroke systems of care in Virginia. Paul serves as a spokesperson for the AHA/ASA and has presented his story of stroke and life after stroke to new employees. Paul encourages other people he meets to become advocates as well, by recruiting members to join *You're the Cure* and participate in our issue campaigns. Congratulations Paul and thank you for being a devoted *You're the Cure* member.

*Diana Cook*  
North Carolina Advocate of the Year



Diana Cook joined *You're the Cure* after her best friend died of a stroke at age 40. Diana had volunteered with the Heart Walk and now she wanted to make even more of a difference. Diana got started by attending the 2006 NC Advocate Training. From there she agreed to become a *You're the Cure* Captain. She jumped right into the advocacy arena by taking on the challenge of chairing the advocacy committee for a local coalition, Smokefree Mecklenburg. She arranged

meetings and met with local policy makers throughout the county and with the Mecklenburg State Delegation. Diana helped plan the coalition's legislative strategy. With the knowledge she received at the advocate training and some help from AHA staff, she began signing on to letters to the editor and soon was writing and submitting letters of her own.

Diana attended the Smokefree Mecklenburg Day at the Capitol. She also attended the 2007 Congressional Heart and Stroke Lobby Day where she not only was a participant but a presenter on media advocacy. During this time, she also supported the HEART for Women Act by having co-workers complete Red Dress paper dolls. She has presented her story about stroke at a Get With The Guidelines - Stroke Workshop. She champions the stroke issue with policy makers and helped support efforts to successfully pass the NC Stroke Advisory Council Recommendations.

This fall, Diana once again was an active Heart Walk captain and coordinated 110 Team Captains with 865 registered walkers and collectively raised \$263,666.50 which was the largest contributing team for the Charlotte Heart walk. In addition she recruited volunteers to help work at the "I Vote With My Heart" booth. She encourages others to become advocates and one of her recruits has attended our federal lobby day. Congratulations Diana, and thank you for being a dedicated member of *You're the Cure*.

*Stephanie Dempsey*  
South Carolina Advocate of the Year



Stephanie Dempsey is a survivor of heart disease and is a woman on a mission. We met Stephanie through her involvement with the women and heart disease luncheon in Columbia. She had served as a local spokesperson with the media and was ready to tell her story to legislators. Stephanie attended the 2006 Congressional Heart and Stroke Lobby Day. Since that time she has continued to be an active advocate on issues at both the state and federal levels.

Stephanie attended the 2007 SC Advocate training which helped prepare advocates for the SC legislative session. She watches closely the legislative issues in South Carolina and has attended the state lobby day and Go Red Rally at the Statehouse. Stephanie enthusiastically embraced the Red Dress paper doll campaign for the Heart For Women Act and got more than 200 dolls signed! She was a proud participant at the Go Red Rally at the 2007 Congressional Heart and Stroke Lobby Day.

In May 2007, Stephanie told a packed audience the story of her personal battles with the healthcare system at the kick-off for the "Are You Covered – Millions of Voices for Quality Healthcare" campaign. She inspired the audience and the media as well. Stephanie stated at the event, "For once I felt that all of the struggles my family and I have faced over the past year were being validated by organizations that have come together for the greater good of ALL Americans. This is a step forward that must be taken."

This year she has faced health challenges and health care access challenges, but through it all, she has used her experiences to help *You're the Cure* support policies that will improve the lives of all Americans. Congratulations Stephanie and thank you for being a dedicated member of *You're the Cure*.

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