



We Are Columbia

PRESS RELEASE

Public and Media Relations Department

(P) 803-545-3020 | (F) 803-343-8719

pio@columbiasc.net | www.columbiasc.net



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Contact: Lauren Harper at 803-908-2603 | ljharper@columbiasc.net

Columbia Citizens Join Mayor Benjamin to Fight City's No. 1 Killer – Heart Disease

Mayor will lead residents, local celebrities in first series of walks downtown to battle heart disease, encourage heart health

COLUMBIA, S.C. (Sept. 1, 2016) – Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin will lead residents, city employees and local celebrities at 11 a.m. on Sept. 7 as they literally take steps from City Hall to the State House to fight the No. 1 killer of Columbia citizens – heart disease.

Mayor Benjamin will host the city's first "Move with the Mayor Challenge," a month-long series of walks to raise awareness about heart disease and ways to prevent it. The campaign, a partnership between the City of Columbia and the National Forum for Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention, encourages residents to walk with the Mayor for 30 minutes every Wednesday from Sept. 7 until World Heart Day, Sept. 29.

"I know how busy people can get, myself included, but your health is still one of the most important things to tend to," said Mayor Benjamin. "If we can find just 30 minutes of each day to walk, we can add years to our lives. I'd love for everyone to join me in walking today for a healthier tomorrow."

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. In South Carolina, heart disease accounted for more than 49,000 hospitalizations in 2014 alone, leading to an estimated \$3.1 billion in hospitalization costs.

John Clymer, executive director of the National Forum for Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention, said walking is one of the easiest ways to lower a person's chances of heart disease and its risk factors, including high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes. Research shows that walking as little as 30 minutes a day can significantly reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke.

"Getting on the road to a healthier heart doesn't have to take a lot of time. It can be as quick as a 30-minute walk," said Clymer, whose nonprofit organization focuses on saving lives through public education and policy initiatives. "Just take your first steps now, and you'll be on your way to a healthier, happier life."

Join Mayor Benjamin on the Wednesday walks downtown with professionals, city employees and local public figures. The walks start at City Hall, 1737 Main St., and end at the State House. The first 100 attendees will receive a pedometer to keep up with their steps daily.

The walks will be held at 11 a.m. on each Wednesday of the month. During the last week, the walk will be held Thursday, Sept. 29 to celebrate World Heart Day with a heart-healthy lunch to follow.

The goal is to keep Columbia residents walking each day from now on.

"We're thrilled to partner with Columbia on these series of walks that could save tens, hundreds or even thousands of lives," Clymer said. "You just need to get started walking, and keep at it. You, your heart and your family will thank you."

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About the National Forum for Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention:

The [National Forum for Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention](http://www.nationalforum.org) brings together the most dynamic and diverse organizations in cardiovascular health, providing a forum and outlet for organizations to amplify their voices. Our members currently represent more than 80 national and international organizations from the public and private healthcare organizations, as well as faith, advocacy, academic, and policy settings. The National Forum is an independent non-profit, 501©(3), voluntary health organization. To learn more, visit www.nationalforum.org.