

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Emily Schumacher | Miss Mankato



Breanna Rose, Still-Life Photographer

As a young girl, I played doctor in my basement with a toy stethoscope from my mother, an ER physician's assistant. Twenty-five years later, my toy stethoscope has turned into a real one and the pretend 911 calls come from real people, the majority of whom are experiencing cardiac arrest.

But before I started working in medicine, I watched my family members battle with heart disease. Because of this, I decided that the little girl who pretended to be a doctor would become one. I wanted to join the fight. So, for the last ten years, I've dedicated my time to teaching the lifesaving

“We all have a heart, and a heart worth saving.”

skills of CPR and AED use to over 4,000 people, working as an emergency room CNA at the Mayo Clinic Health Systems, and preparing for medical school.

In February of 2024, I hosted a CrossFit event and fundraiser. A “healthy” 43-year-old man who was competing that day suffered from a heart attack. After suffering from a cardiac arrest at the hospital and being revived through life-saving care, he texted me, saying, “Your event saved my life.” Moments like these reinforce my life's mission to combat heart disease as both a cardiothoracic surgeon and as Miss Minnesota. I knew then, it was time to get to “The Heart of the Matter.”

The most common thought regarding heart disease is that “it won't happen to me.” However, by 2035, over 50% of Americans will have some form of heart disease, and if left untreated, this can result in needing life-saving CPR and AED support. The good news is it is preventable. By working with the Miss America Opportunity as Miss Minnesota, we can do much more by focusing on prevention, protection, and preparedness to reverse these statistics.

PREVENT. PROTECT. PREPARE.

PREVENTION

The American Heart Association estimates that up to 90% of heart disease is preventable. Communication and education are crucial to prevention, so as Miss Minnesota, my plan incorporates the following:

- My social media strategy contains the following content pillars: heart health tips, workout inspiration, Miss America journey, nutritious recipes, and medical school insights.
- I provide free resources on my website: a cookbook; workout guide; etc.
- I partner with the Minnesota American Heart Association and the Minnesota Department of Health (MN 2035 Plan) on events and outreach throughout the state.

PROTECTION

In my ten years of educating on heart disease, I've seen the direct impact that being proactive has on the trajectory of a person's health and life. The proactive measures I advocate for are:

- Visit your doctor regularly to understand your health, risk factors and family history.
- Know the signs and symptoms of heart disease for yourself and those around you.
- Through my partnership with Play for Patrick, I join cardiologists and a medical team to obtain echocardiograms, EKGs and basic vitals for children. Through this partnership, we've found 313 unknown heart defects that if left undetected could have led to a sudden cardiac arrest or death.



PREPAREDNESS

Every hour in the United States, approximately 38 individuals will suffer from a cardiac arrest outside of a hospital. Today, only 50% of Americans know how to perform CPR/AED. As a certified instructor, I contribute to this education by:

- Providing financially accessible CPR certifications. Certifications cost \$150, and I believe there should be no economic barriers to learning life-saving skills.
- Donating my time to train communities on how to perform CPR and use an AED.
- Partnering with Brian Platz, Coon Rapids Police Officer, to provide affordable AEDs to community spaces.

After ten years of research, studying and competing, it's time for my two worlds to come together and fight heart disease. As Miss Minnesota, my medical expertise and the power of the Miss America Opportunity can create an incredible community that will amplify the importance of heart health and create a healthier nation.

Emily Schumacher

