

# CELEBRATING F.A.S.T. HEROES AND THE PEOPLE THEY SAVE

## MAY IS AMERICAN STROKE MONTH

F.A.S.T. heroes are ready to spot stroke signs and call 9-1-1 at a moment's notice. They may have the power to make a life-and-death difference. Or the difference between a full recovery and permanent disability. You can be a F.A.S.T. hero, too.



## WOMAN SAVED BY F.A.S.T. RESPONSE TO STROKE

*A Patient Story*

### THE FORESHADOWING COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE OBVIOUS IF IT WAS SCRIPTED.

During lunch with her friend at a restaurant, Julie Voigt said, "I'm really lucky that I didn't have a stroke. My family has a real, real history of it, with my aunt..."

Just then her words slurred and she leaned to one side, unable to hold herself up. Julie's luck had run out.

Immediately 9-1-1 was called and she was rushed to a hospital where she was administered a clot-busting drug, but the drug

didn't fully work. The clot was still there, so her doctor used a clot retrieval device.

Quick recognition of Julie's stroke signs and a speedy 9-1-1 call, combined with lightning-fast EMS response and hospital staff expertise, saved her life and enabled a full recovery.

The American Stroke Association's Together to End Stroke initiative, nationally sponsored by Medtronic, teaches the acronym F.A.S.T. to help people recognize a stroke and respond:



Additional stroke signs include: Sudden severe headache with no known cause; sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; or sudden confusion or trouble understanding.

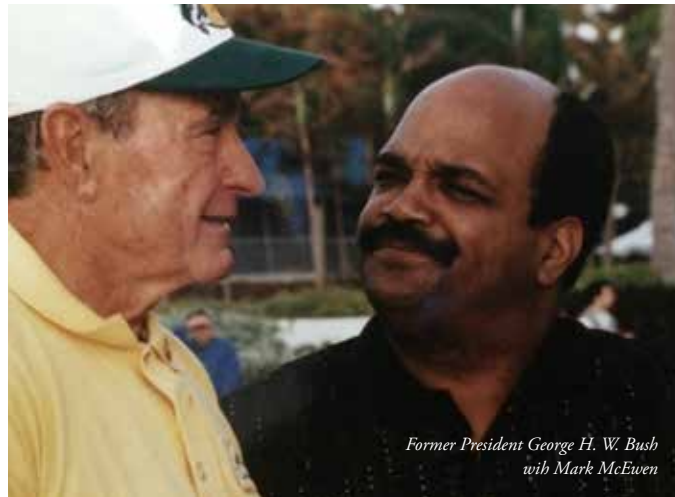
Together to End Stroke offers a free "Spot a Stroke F.A.S.T." mobile app for iOS and Android, which includes the warning signs and a searchable map to find local hospitals recognized for heart and stroke care.



VISIT [STROKEASSOCIATION.ORG](http://STROKEASSOCIATION.ORG) TO SEE A VIDEO OF JULIE'S STORY.

# HOW A FORMER PRESIDENT JOINED MY STROKE SUPPORT NETWORK

By Mark McEwen



Former President George H. W. Bush  
with Mark McEwen

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## MAY IS AMERICAN STROKE MONTH.

We talk about stroke all year, but really focus on it in May, thanks to a presidential proclamation first signed by President George Herbert Walker Bush in 1989.

I first interviewed the 41st President at his Bonefish Tournament, an event that raised thousands of dollars for various charities. This was in 2000, long before stroke was an important part of my life.

We talked four times over the years, one being shortly after the 9/11 attacks. We were back at the tournament, but current events couldn't be ignored. He had been president during Desert Storm and now his son was at the helm.

With national cameras rolling, I asked, "When you see the same names in the news, the same towns, the same countries, do you have any regrets?"

I'd never seen a president get red in the face or angry. I saw both.

I always tell people to forget that the camera is there. We both did and had what is known as a "spirited conversation." Afterwards, he shook my hand, hard.

I regretted my question the entire trip home. That evening, I received a fax from President Bush requesting a copy of our interview for his presidential library. Apparently, people he listened to had seen the interview and liked it, which helped change his mind. I happily sent it to him with a lightened heart.

Years later, he gave me an unexpected gift: the gift of support.

I had left the network and gone to Orlando to anchor for WKMG when I had my stroke. After months of rehabilitation, my friend Harry Smith, anchor for "The Early Show," came to interview me. After the show aired, my cell phone rang. It was President George H. W. Bush.

He had seen the interview and told me how well he thought I was coming along. It meant so much to me, especially then. It made me want to run, not walk, to rehab.

When you have a stroke, your support network plays a starring role in your recovery. Everyone's network looks a little different. For the lucky few, a former president might even make the list.

I later learned 41 was responsible for proclaiming the first National Stroke Awareness Month, now commonly known as American Stroke Month, and it warmed my heart.

There was a time that stroke was in the shadows. We've brought it into the light over the decades. We must continue this important work. I challenge you to become a F.A.S.T hero. Know the warning signs, be prepared to spot a stroke F.A.S.T. and call 9-1-1 at the very first sign. For more information, visit [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).

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Mark McEwen worked for many years in a variety of high profile journalism positions, including anchoring "CBS This Morning" and serving as weather and entertainment reporter for "The Early Show." He was a correspondent for "48 Hours" and continues to work in television today. He tweets at @McEwenMark and blogs at [iammarkncewen.blogspot.com](http://iammarkncewen.blogspot.com)



## FINDING SUPPORT AFTER STROKE

A new online network makes finding a supportive ear or crowdsourcing a question as easy as opening a web browser. The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association Support Network is free and available 24/7 at [StrokeAssociation.org/supportnetwork](http://StrokeAssociation.org/supportnetwork).

# STROKE DEATH RATE DOWN, BUT WORK REMAINS

By Joseph Broderick, M.D.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new building, everyone looks up and marvels at the shiny structure.

The reality is, this overnight sensation was years in the making. It took time to draw up the plans, raise the money and then to actually build it, from the framework to screwing in every lightbulb.

A comparison can be made to the downward trend of stroke deaths. After generations of efforts, stroke dropped to the No. 5 leading cause of death in the U.S.

For those of us who've devoted our careers to battling this disease, this news is incredibly exciting. The best part? We know we can still do better.

We know we can prevent even more strokes.

We know we can effectively treat stroke, improving the quality of life for survivors.

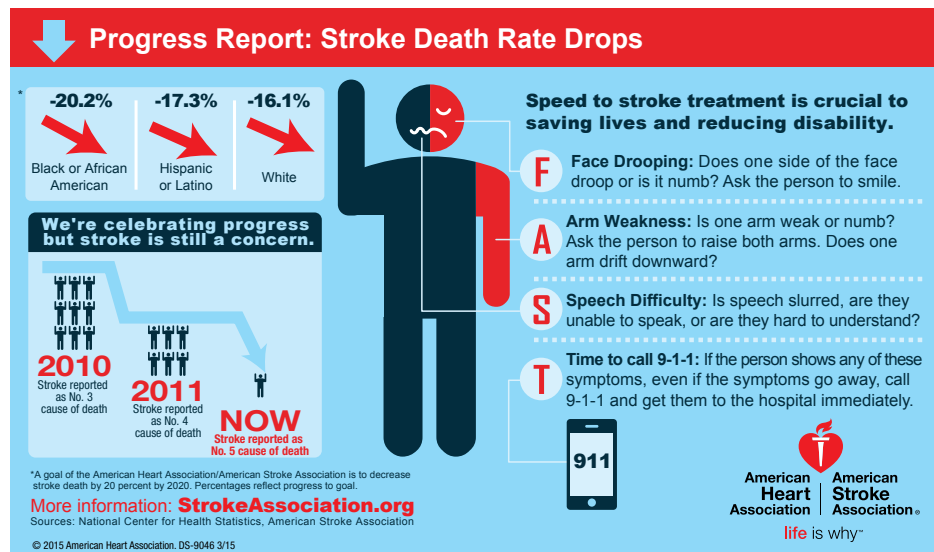
We also know we can't do it alone.



## PREVENTING STROKE

As a society, we need to reduce risk factors. Systems changes such as anti-smoking laws and getting food companies to reduce sodium in their products are important steps. People also need to make changes in their own lives, and their doctors need to treat their underlying conditions.

Let's use a new analogy: a car. The best way to make it last is by taking care of it. Routine maintenance is important.



So is fixing things when they go wrong. Following this formula can help a car make it past 100,000 miles without major problems. Eventually a car's age will catch up to it, but by then, it can have traveled a lot of miles.

Like the hoses and belts of a car, a person's blood vessels wear out over time. Yet, the less strain and the better care you provide, the better they can be when they age.

There's an accumulative effect of risk factors over time. So everyone should take stroke risk factors seriously.



## TREATING STROKE

We also need to improve awareness of the stroke warning signs. More people need to recognize more quickly when someone is having a stroke. This is critical because we know that when treatment is delayed, brain is lost.

Here's a "F.A.S.T." way to remember stroke warning signs. If you see (F)ace drooping, (A)rm weakness or (S)peech difficulty, it's (T)ime to call 9-1-1.

Every second counts when someone is having a stroke. The sooner treatment begins, the more likely a patient is to have a good outcome and the less likely they are to die from a stroke.

And we do have effective treatments such as tPA and devices to open up occluded blood vessels and medications and devices to fix ruptured brain aneurysms and blood vessels.



## BEATING STROKE

The next layer in our progress against this disease is improving recovery by finding more and better ways to help people who have substantial brain injury from stroke.

I often say the future of stroke research is how we can enhance stroke recovery. Many people fear the consequences of living with stroke more than dying from a stroke—the loss of a career, the inability to drive, needing others to provide basic daily care for you. The physical and emotional cost is incalculable; the financial burden is rough, too.

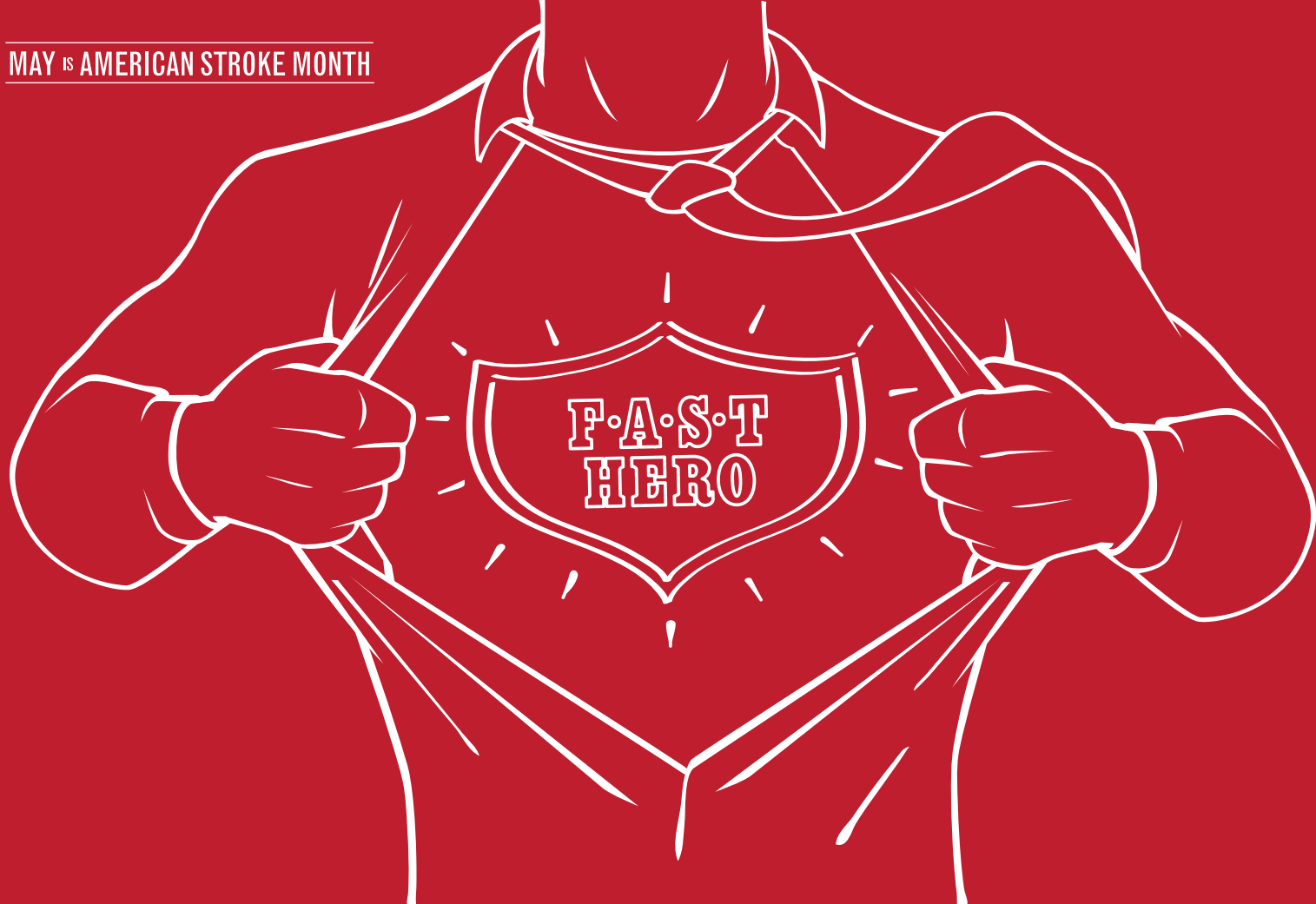
So, to me, the news about stroke dropping to the No. 5 cause of death in the U.S. is exciting, yet not quite worthy of a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

It feels more like halfway point in construction.

**What we've done so far looks great—it's a demonstration that success is possible. But there's still more work to be done by all of us.**

Joseph Broderick, M.D. is director of the University of Cincinnati Neuroscience Institute and chair of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's Stroke Council.

MAY IS AMERICAN STROKE MONTH



## WANT TO LOOK LIKE A F.A.S.T. HERO?

Hold the illustration up to your chest,  
take a selfie and use #FASThero.

## WANT TO BE A F.A.S.T. HERO?

Ace the quiz at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org)  
and prove you can spot a stroke F.A.S.T.



**Together**  
to End Stroke™



<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>T</b>
FACE DROOPING	ARM WEAKNESS	SPEECH DIFFICULTY	TIME TO CALL 911