



News Release

For immediate release

Brown & Toland Physicians honors heart attack survivor Jeffrey Houck with Lifestyle Change Award during Heart Walk

Houck, of Campbell, Calif., awarded by Brown & Toland Physicians in Justin Herman Plaza, San Francisco, during the American Heart Association Heart Walk

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2013

SAN FRANCISCO — After a blocked artery nearly ended his life, Jeffrey Houck swapped out cigarettes, fast food and energy drinks for daily exercise and healthier meals.

For his exceptional effort to turn his health around, **Brown & Toland Physicians** (www.browntoland.com) awarded Houck the Lifestyle Change Award at the American Heart Association Heart Walk in San Francisco on Sept. 20.

“This award to me is about getting a second chance,” Houck said. “I knew my previous lifestyle was hazardous to my health, but always assumed that I would pay for it later rather than sooner. My heart attack was a wake-up call to change the way I was living. That memo was received loud and clear.”

Houck, 42, frequently traveled for work, relying on fast food, energy drinks and cigarettes to get him through the day. The father of three from Campbell experienced a lot of stress that took a toll on his body.

On a work trip in July, he woke up with severe muscle pain in his upper back, shoulders and neck. Houck went to an urgent care center where he was diagnosed with stress and shoulder tension and was given mild muscle relaxers and told to ice the affected area.

“I simply figured that I had been working too hard and that carrying my laptop bag around for days had finally caught up to me,” Houck said.

Overnight, the pain moved from his back to his chest and left arm, but denial kept him from going to the hospital. By 5 p.m., he knew something was wrong and contacted a coworker, who drove him to the ER. He was admitted with a 99 percent blockage of the left anterior descending artery. Doctors put in a stent that saved his life. He spent three days in the intensive care unit and was released a couple days later wearing a cardiac defibrillator.

Today, Houck wears running shoes rather than a defibrillator. After his heart

attack, he changed his life completely, shunning erratic meals of fast food for three square meals that often include chicken, fish and vegetables. After 22 years of smoking, he quit cigarettes and started a daily walking routine.

“You always hear people say, ‘stop and smell the roses,’” Houck said. “Walking allows me to do just that and appreciate even the simplest things in life, like a breath of fresh air.”

Houck’s story is a reminder that changing your life can help save your life, especially when it comes to heart disease, said Richard Fish, CEO of Brown & Toland Physicians.

“We are proud to be honoring someone like Jeffrey who has made major strides through diet and exercise to improve his health, for the sake of himself and his family,” Fish said.

This is the eighth year that Brown & Toland Physicians has sponsored the Heart Walk in downtown San Francisco. Brown & Toland’s contributions support the [American Heart Association](#)’s vital cardiovascular disease research, advocacy and education.

About Brown & Toland Physicians Founded in 1992, Brown & Toland Physicians is a leading network of independent doctors focused on delivering personalized, high quality, and affordable healthcare to the San Francisco Bay Area. Brown & Toland’s 2,100 physicians, who care for more than 300,000 HMO and PPO patients, are dedicated to improving care through a number of patient-centered programs and use electronic tools to coordinate and deliver care. The

group is leading the way forward in healthcare with its patient-centered medical home, My Health Medical Group, and by participating in multiple accountable care projects, such as the Pioneer Accountable Care Organization (ACO) model. To learn more, visit brownandtoland.com.

For additional information contact:

Richard Angeloni

Director, Integrated Marketing and Communications

415.972.4307

rangeloni@btmg.com

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