

CeCe's Story.

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For me, Winning Miss Plus America was one of the most exciting days of my life. But the real journey began 3 years ago. On January 11, 2010 I nearly lost my life when I had my first heart attack. My life changed forever. My only memory was waking up in the emergency room with a nurse standing over me asking me who my emergency contact was because someone had to sign for me to have emergency surgery. I had second degree heart blockage and needed to operate right away.

I was very healthy, happy and in great shape. At the time I was a mail carrier walking 8 hours a day, I was an avid swimmer and participated in several marathons yearly. I experienced a heart attack while at the young age of 33. This was a devastating experience that; later led me to have 9 different heart procedures. During my 5th surgery I actually flat lined. I woke up in ICU and the doctors told my family that he wasn't sure what happened but God had bigger plans for me. Thereafter, I ended up having 4 more procedures. During my final 2, the 8th & 9th surgery, which was performed in a 24 hour period, I had a TIA, this is a mini stroke. Both surgeries in such a short time frame were a lot of trauma on my body and that caused the TIA. I developed a blood clot in my right artery and was put on IV heparin for 4 days and Lovenox injections in my stomach for 6 months after that. This normal 2 hour surgery ended up taking 8 hours. Afterwards, I was unable to speak or had use of my limbs on the right side of my body for a while. I endured speech & physical therapy as well as cardiac rehab. Currently I have a pace maker implant that helps keep me alive...thank GOD for modern technology! I felt that after surviving this life changing experience, I knew there were a couple of things I needed to do. First, I changed my eating habits to a more low sodium, sugar and cholesterol diet. I participate in at least 30 minutes of cardio activity a day such as walking, running or riding my bike, and I make sure I schedule my yearly checkups.

And the second thing I needed to do was fulfill my dreams. As a young girl I have always wanted to be a queen. So to fulfill my fantasy I decided to compete in the Miss Plus America Pageant. I will admit that I didn't have the most confidence in the world but I knew I had to make a difference and so something great. I chose my platform to be "Matter of the Heart" Advocating for cardiovascular disease awareness. Advocating for heart disease became not only my platform, but my passion. I had to spread the word about the importance of living a heart healthy lifestyle. I want to inform the world about the risks and how to prevent going through the experiences that I faced. My motto is "if I can touch one person's life; I have fulfilled mine". My desire is to travel all over the world and tell my testimony as well as educate others about the number 1 killer in America. Every 34 seconds somebody dies of a heart attack.

What steps will you take to prevent this deadly disease from affecting you or someone you love? **Join me in my efforts to prevent heart disease; who knows...the life you may be saving could be your own.**