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American Heart Association Announces 2020 “Real People. Real Change.” Award Ambassadors

- *Award recipients made significant lifestyle changes to improve their heart health*
- *One finalist to win Peloton bike in online voting Aug. 30-Sept. 2*

INDIANAPOLIS (Aug. 27, 2020) – Four central Indiana residents have been named finalists of the American Heart Association’s seventh annual “Real People. Real Change.” program presented by UnitedHealthcare. One finalist will win a Peloton bike after an online voting contest Aug. 30 – Sept. 2. The other three will receive \$500.

“Real People. Real Change.” recognizes individuals who have made lifestyle changes to live healthier lives and inspire others. Nominations for this year’s program were accepted through July 31, and a committee of past winners selected this year’s four finalists.

The public can read about this year’s finalists and vote for an overall winner at www.heart.org/indyrealchange.

“UnitedHealthcare is grateful for the opportunity to recognize these inspiring people who are taking action to improve their heart health and the health of their families, friends and co-workers,” said Kim Sonerholm, CEO, UnitedHealthcare of Indiana. “These ‘Real People. Real Change.’ winners are shining examples that making even small changes to our lifestyles can lead to dramatic improvements in our health.”

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States, causing one in three deaths each year. Some heart disease risk factors include family history and aging; however, up to 80 percent of heart disease is preventable by making small changes to lead a heart-healthy lifestyle.

The finalists were nominated and evaluated based on the seven factors for ideal heart health that make up the American Heart Association’s “Life’s Simple 7”:

- Manage Blood Pressure
- Control Cholesterol
- Reduce Blood Sugar
- Get Active
- Eat Better
- Lose Weight
- Stop Smoking

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The "Real People. Real Change." finalists are:

Mike Click - Marion

Click had a series of health wake-up calls during the past two years, including two trips to the hospital with heart problems. He increased his physical activity to include three-mile runs, 45-minute sessions on a stairmaster and weight training. He changed his diet to eliminate sodas and to begin each day with a healthy breakfast. Click lost more than 30 lbs. and has his heart rate and blood pressure under control.

Brandon Douglas - Carmel

Over the course of the last 8 years, life had gotten in the way of Douglas's previously active lifestyle. And slowly, his weight crept up to more than 280 lbs. In July 2019 Douglas adopted a new diet, eliminating all processed foods, including added sugars. Douglas, who always walked regularly on the Monon Trail, joined a gym and began doing high-intensity, interval training. Eventually he also started running. Over the course of the last year, Douglas has lost more than 95 lbs., and his blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar numbers, which were always borderline high, are all in the normal range.

Bridgett McDaniels-Russell - Indianapolis

McDaniels-Russell's health journey began nearly 10 years ago when she was at her highest weight and was taking medication for high blood pressure and high cholesterol. When the doctor suggested bariatric surgery, a procedure that had had negative impacts on both her mother and her sister, McDaniels-Russell knew it was time to take control of her life. A chef by training, she adopted a plant-based diet with a goal of getting off her medications. Within three years she had lost more than 50 lbs. At that point, she took up running. Today she runs 5Ks, marathons and ultra-marathons. Through her efforts she has lost 140 lbs. and gotten her blood pressure and cholesterol into normal ranges.

Sharvonne Williams - Indianapolis

Williams has been exercising and eating healthier for several years, but she redoubled her efforts last winter after suffering a TIA (sometimes referred to as a mini-stroke) while on vacation last October. Williams started exercising by seeking out free group opportunities around Indianapolis. She would meet groups for Zumba classes, kickboxing, climbing stairs and taking walks. She recently added Barre Blend and Beachbody programs. She took control of her diet by using portion-control containers. Containers for vegetables and proteins are bigger while containers for carbohydrates are smaller. She also tries to drink one gallon of water every day. Sharvonne has lost almost 60 lbs. since the start of the year and has lowered her blood pressure from dangerous levels into a normal range.

Additional information about each winner and the "Real People. Real Change." program is available at www.heart.org/indyrealchange.

About the American Heart Association

The American Heart Association is a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We are dedicated to ensuring equitable health in all communities. Through collaboration with numerous organizations, and powered by millions of volunteers, we fund innovative research, advocate for the public's health and share lifesaving resources. The Dallas-based organization has been a leading source of health information for nearly a century. Connect with us on heart.org, [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/heart.org), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/heart.org) or by calling 1-800-AHA-USA1.

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