



A study done by the Harvard School of Public Health and published in The New England Journal of Medicine found that being overweight and obese was the single most important risk factor that predicted who would develop type 2 diabetes. During the follow-up period, study results showed that regular exercise and improved diet helped with type 2 diabetes prevention. Diabetes is the fifth leading cause of death for women in the United States (sixth for the general population). Two-thirds to three-fourths of people with diabetes will suffer and die from cardiovascular disease.

These statistics have led us to emphasize women from our book: Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America who were pioneers in weight control, exercise, and issues related to cardiovascular disease.

In our July 2011 article on health and wellness, we discussed Catharine Beecher who developed calisthenics, Judi Sheppard Missett who developed Jazzercise, and Jean Nidetch who created Weight Watchers. In this month's article, we profile Ellen Swallow Richards, an early advocate of a healthy lifestyle for women, Jenny Craig,

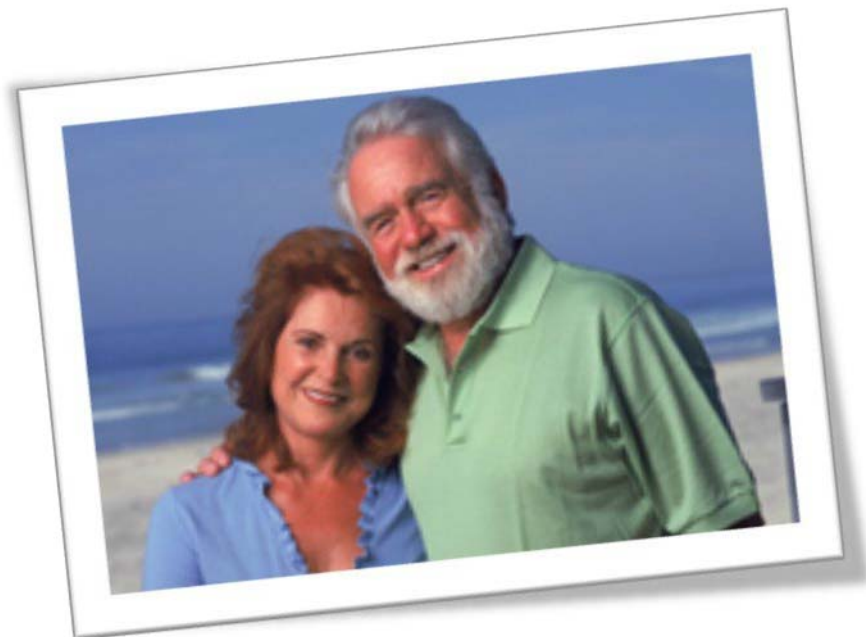
who co-founded the weight loss and nutritional food company that bears her name, and Bernadine Healy, a cardiologist and the first woman to lead the National Institutes of Health.

Chemist **Ellen Swallow Richards** is credited with being the founder of ecology through her work in surveying the quality of water in Massachusetts and her involvement with environmental chemistry. Although admitted to MIT as a special student without charge (so that the President could say that she was not a student should anyone question her admittance), Richards earned her BS from MIT, the same year that she received her MA from Vassar.



After Richards established the Women's] Laboratory at MIT to provide scientific education for women, she helped found the organization that today is known as the American Association of University Women (AAUW). She is also credited as the founder of the field of home economics; she organized the science section of a correspondence school established in 1887. Through her correspondence with the students, she learned that women were seeking help with a wide range of problems including] manners of dress, food preparation and exercise. Richards noted that illness seemed to be a constant problem, so she prepared a pamphlet that discussed healthful dress and food and the importance of exercise and intellectual interests. She identified these as helping to balance the routine of a household.

In 1890, Richards opened the New England Kitchen in Boston, to demonstrate how healthy foods could be selected and prepared. The kitchen offered for sale, for home consumption, cooked foods that had been scientifically prepared to provide the maximum nourishment at the lowest cost. The cooking area was open to the public, so that methods of preparation could be demonstrated. Richards' work with the New England Kitchen led to other kitchens around the country. She was also contracted by the Boston School Committee; their issue was to ask her help in providing nutritious school lunches. In this way, Ellen Swallow Richards helped to form dietetics as a profession for educated women. In 1899, she organized and chaired a summer conference in Lake Placid, New York where she established the profession of home economics.



Another woman who believes in healthy eating is entrepreneur, **Jenny Craig**. With her husband, she built Jenny Craig, Inc., into the largest and most successful centre-based weight loss company in the world. The company was founded in 1983 in Australia and brought to the U.S. in 1985. The Company is dedicated to improving people's lives by helping them not only to lose weight, but to keep it off. The program is a clinically proven weight loss program and the

results are impressive! In a clinical trial published in the October 27, 2010, issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association, clients of the Jenny Craig program were noted to have lost an average of 10% of their body weight at the one-year mark. Even more impressive is that at the two-year mark, they had maintained an average 7.9% weight loss.

From weight loss, we move to heart health. Weight loss is often a necessary part of maintaining heart health. Cardiologist **Dr. Bernadine Healy** served as the first female director of the National Institutes of Health. During her tenure, she launched the Women's Health Initiative which overturned false assumptions about women's health. This was a \$625 million-dollar study of the causes, prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis and cancer in both middle-aged and older women. Long after Healy's tenure, the initiative continued yielding important findings. In 2002, the study revealed that prolonged estrogen-progestin hormone replacement therapy in postmenopausal women increased the risks of breast cancer, stroke and heart attacks.



The study has led to important information

regarding women's health including revelations of previously undiscovered dangers to women's health, such as the increased risks of heart attacks and strokes in post-menopausal women. Healy served as president of the American Heart Association in 1998, where she initiated programs for both women and minorities. She was also the first physician to head the American Red Cross.

As many people in the U.S. struggle with weight gain, obesity and the threat of diabetes, it shouldn't be surprising that women, always attuned to health and social issues, led the way in developing both methods and systems to help others with weight problems, health issues and the prevention of serious illnesses.



Charlotte S. Waisman, PhD, co-author of *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America* (HarperCollins), is a national champion and advocate for women as a professor and keynote speaker. As an executive coach, Waisman coauthored *50 Activities for Developing Leaders* and *The Leadership Training Activity Book*. She is a principal with a consulting company specializing in leadership and workforce excellence initiatives.

Jill S. Tietjen, PE, co-author of *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America* (HarperCollins), is an author, speaker and electrical engineer. Her other books include the *Setting the Record Straight* series. Tietjen is a top historian on scientific and technical women. She is President/CEO of *Technically Speaking*, a consulting company that specializes in improving career opportunities for women in technology.

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