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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 21, 2025

The American Heart Association to visit San Juan Island Library to help launch a self-measured blood pressure program.

(Friday Harbor, WA) – Patrons who visit the San Juan Island Library can now measure and track their blood pressure at home as part of the American Heart Association’s Libraries with Heart initiative. San Juan Island Library is the second library in Washington to roll out the program – Timberland Regional Library was the first a year ago.

Patrons of the library can now check out two blood pressure measuring kits, with additional kits available from the Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center, and a blood pressure measurement station available onsite at the Mullis Community Senior Center. Visit the Library on April 3rd for a presentation about how to use the equipment. Mullis Center Executive Director Anna Coffelt-Kuetzing reminds community members that "The Mullis Center is open M-W-F from 9 AM to 4 PM, except holidays, and we welcome community members to stop by to use the blood pressure monitoring station."

"The Library is very excited about this initiative," states Assistant Director Anthony Morris. "We want to spread the word about this great program and believe it will have a positive impact on our community. The blood pressure measurement kits are a great addition to our growing 'Library of Things' collection."

Included in each kit are American Heart Association educational materials about how to take your blood pressure at home, what those numbers mean, a log for recording numbers and a list of local health care providers ready to answer questions. All the materials also are available in both English and Spanish.

According to the American Heart Association, nearly half of American adults (about 122 million people) have high blood pressure, or hypertension, which can lead to deadly health consequences such as stroke, heart disease, kidney disease, vision loss and sexual dysfunction if left untreated. The best way to know if you have high blood pressure is to check it and talk about it with your health care provider.

Uninsured and underinsured library patrons and community members who need additional help managing their blood pressure or other health concerns can meet with a Community Health Worker from the Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center to ascertain where low barrier health services can be obtained. Jennifer Armstrong, Director of JSLFRC notes "We're grateful to the American Heart Association for providing this valuable resource to our Community Health Worker Program – it will greatly enhance the ways that we are able to support the health of vulnerable community members – especially those who are homebound".

Blood pressure numbers of less than 120/80 mm Hg are considered within the normal range. If your results fall into this category, stick with heart-healthy habits like following a balanced diet and getting regular exercise. People with elevated blood pressure are at risk of developing high blood pressure if steps aren't taken to control the condition. Those with elevated numbers should consult with their health care provider for recommended next steps to reduce health risks.

For more blood pressure information, visit www.heart.org/bp or contact Gabriel Méndez at gmendez@sjlib.org or call (360) 378-2798.

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