At the request of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC’s) Division of Blood Disorders, the “King” and “Queen” towers at the Concourse at Landmark Center in Atlanta, Georgia lit up their crowns red in April in recognition of World Hemophilia Day.

Started in 1989 by the World Federation of Hemophilia (WFH), in honor of their founder Frank Schnabel’s birthday, World Hemophilia Day is celebrated each year on April 17th. The goal of this annual health observance day is to increase awareness of hemophilia and other inherited bleeding disorders and ultimately lead to earlier diagnosis and access to care for the millions who remain without treatment. This year’s theme was “Hear their voices” with a special focus on supporting the millions of women and girls affected by bleeding disorders.

Hemophilia is an inherited bleeding disorder in which the blood does not clot properly. This can lead to spontaneous bleeding as well as prolonged bleeding following injuries or surgery. Blood contains many proteins called clotting factors that help to stop bleeding. People with hemophilia have low levels of either factor VIII (“factor eight”), which causes hemophilia A, or factor IX (“factor nine”), which causes hemophilia B. Because of the way hemophilia is inherited, the condition predominantly affects males, while females with the genetic change in the clotting factor are typically referred to as carriers. Female carriers often have no symptoms of hemophilia, but some females who are carriers can have symptoms. In fact, some doctors describe these women and girls as having mild hemophilia.

The World Federation of Hemophilia created the “Light it Up Red!” Initiative to help raise awareness of hemophilia and bring attention to women and girls who live with a bleeding disorder or who have someone in their family who does. Over the past three years, the Light it Up Red! Initiative has grown to include 40 landmarks around the world lit in red for World Hemophilia Day. Check out WFH’s Facebook page and Twitter handle to see many of the landmarks across the country and globe that participated in the landmark lighting event.

This year, the National Hemophilia Foundation, a longtime CDC partner through its chapter network, successfully organized numerous landmark lightings across the country and held community activities to honor people affected by hemophilia. Here is a list of some of the landmarks that participated in the Light it Up Red! Initiative:

- Phoenix Children’s Hospital and Arizona Science Center (Phoenix, AZ)
- Miami Tower (Miami, FL)
- LAX Pylons (Los Angeles, CA)
- St. Louis Science Center (St. Louis, MO)
- Wrigley Building (Chicago, IL)
- Portland Town Hall (Portland, ME)
Another CDC funded partner, the Hemophilia Federation of America, along with one of its member organizations, the New England Hemophilia Association, had over five buildings in downtown Providence, Rhode Island lit red during their annual symposium from Wednesday, April 5th through Saturday, April 8th. They also hosted a WaterFire event on April 8th. Thirty two braziers (floating bonfire pits) in the Waterplace Park Basin and in front of the Providence Place Mall were lit to honor and raise awareness of bleeding disorders.

In addition to the landmark lightings, women with bleeding disorders in local communities were asked to share their stories by writing about an experience and posting videos and photos online at https://www.wfh.org/en/whd. WFH also called for individuals to actively tweet about how they planned to celebrate World Hemophilia Day 2017 using the hashtag #WHD2017. Resources were shared on WFH’s new eLearning platform as well at http://elearning.wfh.org.

For more information on hemophilia visit our web pages at https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hemophilia/index.html.

For more information on bleeding disorders affecting women, visit our web pages at https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/blooddisorders/women/index.html and register to attend our upcoming webinar “Women and Girls with Bleeding Disorders: Challenges in Diagnosis and Management” presented by Dr. Robert Sidonio, Jr. on May 18, 2017.

Here are a few more helpful resources to check out:
National Hemophilia Foundation
Hemophilia Federation of America
Foundation for Women & Girls with Blood Disorders