

Heart Disease is the #1 killer of women.
We're launching a community counter-attack!


Follow the Fifty
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Sponsored by a grant from the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health as part of a public-private partnership with the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to promote *The Heart Truth*®, a women's heart health awareness and action campaign.

Funding is provided by individuals and corporations including *The Heart Truth* partners Belk Department Stores, Diet Coke, and Swarovski.

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Follow the Fifty
MODELS OF HEART HEALTH

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PRESS RELEASE

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Northeast District Department of Health Awarded \$100K Grant

NDDH & HealthQuest Coalition to partner on *The Heart Truth*® Community Action Program

BROOKLYN – The Foundation for the National Institutes of Health (FNIH) has awarded a \$100,000 grant to the Northeast District Department of Health (NDDH) to conduct *The Heart Truth*® Community Action Program, a women's heart health awareness and action campaign that warns women about heart disease and provides tools to help them take action against its risk factors. NDDH was one of six communities nation-wide to receive the grant award and the only one to receive full funding of \$100K. The campaign will be conducted in partnership with the HealthQuest Northeast Connecticut coalition, a regional health and wellness collaborative working to improve the health of northeastern Connecticut residents.

"Thanks to this generous award from the FNIH, we'll embark on a year-long campaign to spread the message that heart disease is the number one killer of women," said Sue Starkey, NDDH Director of Health. "One in four women dies from heart disease. In fact, in 2008, heart disease killed more women than all cancers combined. Our creative initiative will give northeastern Connecticut women a tremendous opportunity and inspiration to adopt a heart healthy lifestyle."

Follow the Fifty

This month, NDDH and HealthQuest will launch *The Heart Truth*® Community Action Program with the *Follow the Fifty: Models of Heart Health Campaign*. "A strong community of partners stands ready to support this exciting initiative centered on the heart health of 50 women recruited to be the 'Models of Heart Health' for northeastern Connecticut," explained Linda J. Colangelo, NDDH Education and Communications Coordinator and Project Manager for the grant. "Fifty women, ages 25-60, will be the subjects of a highly publicized campaign to achieve heart-healthy lifestyles and raise awareness that heart disease is the number one killer of women. The focus is not necessarily on visual outcomes, it's more about the importance of lowering the risk factors that are impacting your health on the inside. The emphasis here is on being a successful 'role' model rather than a 'runway' model."

Colangelo also explained that there is a role for other women and even a chance for men to be involved with the campaign. Each model will be backed by a coach/mentor and team of cheerleaders who will support the models through nine months of transformation into a heart-healthy lifestyle. Families, organizations, civic groups and businesses are encouraged to form Heart Truth Teams and *Follow the Fifty* by sponsoring or supporting a model. The journey will include a year of community-partner supported events, with successes and challenges chronicled and posted on Facebook and other social media sites. The initiative will culminate in *The Red Dress Divas in December Holiday Spectacular & Community Celebration*, a festive concert, comedy and fashion show produced by Broadway Live Productions that will be used to celebrate the model's success, raise awareness for attendees, and raise funds to support a local heart healthy initiative.

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Recruitment Campaign Underway

Women interested in participating in the campaign must be between the ages of 25-60, have access to email and Internet, must be willing to make certain heart health conditions known, and must commit to an entire year of heart-healthy behavior. Recruits must also have at least one risk factor for heart disease. Risk factors include:

- Smoking
- Being overweight/obese
- Body Mass Index over 25
- High Blood Pressure
- High Cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Over age 55 (Models can be ages 25-60)
- A diagnosis of angina or previous heart attack
- Women who are physically inactive
- Women who have a family history of heart attack/heart disease

“We want to recruit a diverse group of women so we have representation from all racial, social, ethnic, age, and income levels included in this initiative,” said Starkey.”

HealthQuest partners are planning a series of monthly events that will feature a variety of guest speakers, presentations and health screenings. *The Heart Truth*[®] educational materials will be utilized at all events and will be available through partner organizations and physician offices. Models will serve as campaign ambassadors at community events and will also be featured in a series of high-profile ads that will run the entire year in print, on radio & television, video, calendars, and billboards.

Models will also be trained in CPR and the use of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) as part of the Connecticut Department of Public Health HeartSafe Initiative, a community program to foster community environments that improve the survival odds for people suffering sudden cardiac events. *Follow the Fifty* will also align with the CDCs “Million Hearts[™]” Campaign designed to prevent one million heart attacks and strokes over the next five years.

“What is unique about this initiative is the opportunity for others to support the models, physically, nutritionally, emotionally and socially,” said Colangelo. “When we host a health-based event we typically have a large number of health fanatics who participate. This campaign allows us to engage the women who are truly at risk, and give those with healthier lifestyles the opportunity to coach or cheer the models on to success. It’s another meaningful way to keep people connected.”

Missy Bonsall of Brooklyn is excited at the prospect of being a model. “I’ve already been trying to improve my health on my own, adopting the philosophy to ‘shake less by moving more,’” she quips about her recent weight-loss efforts. “*Follow the Fifty* gives me the perfect opportunity to meet my goals of engaging in healthy behaviors with other women, and empowering each other to live a long, healthy and happy life.”

For more information or to apply for the campaign, contact NDDH at 860-774-7350 or email contactus@followthefifty.org. Spaces are limited and the campaign seeks to reach those at high risk or with multiple risk factors. Interested applicants will be required to complete a brief survey to determine their eligibility for the campaign. Selected models will be announced in early March. A website is also being created to host the initiative and will be launched soon at www.followthefifty.org.

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About HealthQuest Northeast Connecticut

HealthQuest Northeast CT is a national Action Community for Health, Innovation and Environmental Change (ACHIEVE) and a collaborative health partnership of: The Northeast District Department of Health, Day Kimball Healthcare, Generations Family Health Center, Northeastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, Plainfield Public Schools, Plainfield Recreation Department, Quinebaug Valley Community College, Representative Mae Flexer, Senator Donald Williams, Steven Townsend, Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group, Town of Putnam Community Development and WINY Radio. The coalition works to improve the health of residents through policy change, with a focus on reducing chronic illness by increasing physical activity and improving access to better nutrition in northeastern Connecticut schools, worksites, communities and homes.

About *The Heart Truth*®

Although significant progress has been made in increasing awareness among women that heart disease is their number one killer (from 34 percent in 2000 to 69 percent in 2009), most fail to make the connection between its risk factors and their personal risk of developing heart disease. *The Heart Truth*® created and introduced the Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness in 2002 to deliver an urgent wake-up call to American women. The Red Dress® reminds women of the need to protect their heart health, and inspires them to take action. For more information about women and heart disease, including materials such as *The Healthy Heart Handbook for Women* and fact sheets about women and heart disease, please visit <http://www.hearttruth.gov> or call the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) Health Information Center at 301-592-8573.

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Want to know more about heart attack warning signs and risk factors? [Our new videos describe what to watch for.](#) [National Wear Red Day](#)® is February 3, 2012.

Join *The Heart Truth* fans on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).



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