



Northeast District Department of Health

69 South Main Street, Unit 4, Brooklyn, CT -6234
860-774-7350 / Fax 860-774-1308 www.nddh.org

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Linda J. Colangelo, Education and Communications Coordinator
860-774-7350 x. 114 / lcolangelo@nddh.org

Northeast District Department of Health Launches VIAL OF LIFE Program

(Brooklyn) – The Northeast District Department of Health (NDDH) has re-launched a program designed to provide Emergency Medical Responders with potentially life-saving medical information in the event that a patient is injured or ill at home and is unable to communicate.

“Our VIAL OF LIFE kits are designed to be very simple,” explained Sue Starkey, Director of Health for NDDH. “Just fill out the medical information form, place it in a plastic bag with other important health care documents, and tape it to the front of your refrigerator. Then put one bright red decal on the plastic bag and another on your front door or window. This alerts emergency responders that you are a VIAL OF LIFE participant. It’s that easy, and it can literally save your life.”

NDDH Education and Communications Coordinator Linda Colangelo introduced this program over a decade ago. She recalls a story of early success when a resident saw an advertisement for the program, obtained a kit and posted it on her refrigerator—where it was found by emergency responders who were called to her house just days later.

“The medics arrived at the home and went straight to the refrigerator to get the medical information,” explained Colangelo. “At the hospital, they gave the form to the ER nurse, who in turn gave it to the doctor. After they had made a copy of it, they handed it back to the patient and said ‘Make sure you put this right back on your refrigerator when you get home – it’s a very important document.’”

The program can be used by all family members, but it is especially helpful for senior citizens, those living alone, or those who are chronically ill.

“NDDH is currently working with area health care providers and emergency responders on a prevention program to reduce falls and injuries among at risk-older populations,” explained Colangelo. “During these partnership meetings one participant asked about revitalizing the Vial of Life Program. NDDH is grateful to the State of Connecticut Office of Rural Health for providing the grant funding that allowed us to replenish our Vial of Life kit supply. We have purchased materials, prepared kits and are happy to be sharing them with partnering agencies across northeast CT.” Copies of the materials are also available on the NDDH website.

Distribution of the kits began in a big way at a community event featuring area first responders. Over 200 guests attending the Sassy Chapeau Fashion Show on May 23, 2019 received Vial of Life information and kits. The event raised funds and awareness for the Northeast CT Women & Girls Fund, and the theme of the hat fashion show honored female *first responders*...so it was a perfect tie-in to promote Vial of Life. Models represented a number of emergency medical services and each took Vial of Life kits for their organizations, which included: KB Ambulance, Putnam Police Department, Woodstock Volunteer Fire Association, Bungay Fire Brigade, Day Kimball Healthcare, Atwood Hose Fire Company, Putnam EMS Ambulance, and East Killingly Fire Department.

Janine Vose was one of the Sassy Chapeau Hat Show models. In addition to working as the NDDH Public Health Nurse, she serves as a volunteer first responder in Killingly. Janine said that the health department has spent the past few weeks getting VIAL OF LIFE program information to local fire companies and town halls. Nearly 1,500 kits have been distributed. According to Vose, “The response has been very positive.”

Starkey commented, “Once the grant-funding is exhausted, it is our hope that we can partner with organizations that have an interest in this type of community program so that we can continue it in the future. One of the functions of public health is to mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems...the VIAL OF LIFE fully supports this objective.”

For more information, or to download forms, visit www.nddh.org. VIAL OF LIFE decals or complete kits may also be requested by calling the health department at 860-774-7350.

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