

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



Follow the Fifty
is a public health
partnership of:



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
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PRESS RELEASE

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Follow the Fifty Models of Heart Health Announced

The Heart Truth® Community Action Program Expands to Accommodate Outstanding Response

BROOKLYN – Following an overwhelming response to their unique *Follow the Fifty Models of Heart Health* campaign (FTF), the Northeast District Department of Health (NDDH) and HealthQuest Northeast Connecticut, a regional health and wellness collaborative working to improve the health of northeastern Connecticut residents, have announced that the initiative will be expanded to include 183 applicants. A small number of applicants who did not fit the grant criteria related to age and residency were encouraged to serve as cheerleaders for the campaign. Models are being notified via email and being given information to prepare for the campaign kick-off event scheduled for March 31st.

On February 3rd, National Wear Red Day®, NDDH launched *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 from the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health and the only one to receive funding of \$100K. The campaign initially sought to recruit fifty participants.

"Three days into the model recruitment campaign, we had 50 applicants," remarked Linda J. Colangelo, FTF Project Manager. "Ten days in we had 100 and we knew we had struck a chord with women in northeastern Connecticut. When we reached the point where we potentially had to turn away more women than we planned to accept, we knew we had to redesign the campaign; so it became *Follow the Fifty* 'teams' instead of individuals. The expansion will create some logistical challenges, but we are more than happy to overcome them if it means potentially saving more women from heart disease."

Colangelo said that the models will be grouped into teams with a designated "captain" and will be supported by a number of coaches, cheerleaders, mentors and sponsors.

Representative Mae Flexer (D-44th Assembly District), a member of the HealthQuest coalition, expressed her delight with the early success of the campaign. "I am so pleased that *Follow the Fifty* has attracted a large, diverse group of women who live and work in northeastern Connecticut," she said. "This will be an exceptional opportunity for these women to reduce their risk factors for heart disease and the campaign is designed in a way that can impact thousands more. I encourage everyone to *Follow the Fifty Models of Heart Health* as they lead us down the road to healthier lifestyles."

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NDDH and other HealthQuest partners are exploring avenues for additional funding in order to accommodate the increased expenses associated with expanding the campaign, which include health screenings, trainings, educational materials, video/film production, and an enhanced social media presence.

Follow the Fifty

HealthQuest partners are planning a series of monthly events that will feature a variety of guest speakers, presentations and opportunities for the models and all the women who *Follow the Fifty* to achieve a heart healthy lifestyle. Models will serve as campaign ambassadors at community events and will also be featured in a series of high-profile ads that will run throughout the year in print, on radio and television, billboards, online videos, and on the campaign website www.followthefifty.org. Their transformative journey culminates on November 30th and December 1st when all the models debut in the Red Dress Divas Holiday Spectacular and Community Celebration, a festive concert, comedy and fashion show produced by Broadway Live Productions that will be used to celebrate the models' success, raise awareness for attendees, and raise funds to support a local heart healthy initiative.

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.

"This is a perfect example of how one grant can have substantial impact in so many areas," said Tammy Wakefield, a member of the NDDH Board of Directors. "By training so many models in CPR/AED use, we have the opportunity to have at least four other towns become eligible for HeartSafe certification. It's a fantastic way to enhance the work we are doing in so many areas and a great benefit to our towns."

For more information, contact NDDH at 860-774-7350 or email contactus@followthefifty.org. Additional information can be found at the campaign website at: www.followthefifty.org, Facebook and on Twitter @followthe50.

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About HealthQuest Northeast Connecticut

HealthQuest Northeast CT is a collaborative health partnership coordinated by the Northeast District Department of Health and has been designated as a national Action Community for Health, Innovation and Environmental Change (ACHIEVE) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Partners include: 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 and environmental 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.](#)
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