

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


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***Follow the Fifty: Models of Heart Health* Brings Public Health Infotainment to Northeastern Connecticut**

Video Production Team from Broadway Live Productions and an Independent Filmmaker will
Document the Year-Long Campaign in Video

BROOKLYN, CONN. – *Follow the Fifty: Models of Heart Health* (FTF), the women's heart health awareness and action campaign created by the Northeast District Department of Health (NDDH) in partnership with the HealthQuest Northeast Connecticut Coalition, has taken the Quiet Corner by storm. In less than a month, the campaign has the community "on red alert" thanks in large part to the contribution of campaign partners including those on the FTF video production team.

"There are so many cameras rolling and flashes popping at each event, models may feel as though they are part of a reality TV show," quipped Linda J. Colangelo, FTF project manager and playwright for Broadway Live Productions, LLC, a performance production company that specializes in musicals and cabaret-style shows. Colangelo has used the concept of "infotainment" in the past with great success to promote public health messages. *Broadway Live Christmas*, a show she originally wrote in 2006, was brought back by demand and updated in 2009 to include messages about H1N1 Influenza, hand washing, respiratory etiquette, and getting a flu shot. The informational and wildly entertaining show became one of the best-selling musicals at The Bradley Playhouse in Putnam.

Knowing that the infotainment concept worked in Northeastern Connecticut, Colangelo employed the same strategy to develop the *Follow the Fifty* initiative. Originally intended to feature the 172 female participants in the Red Dress Divas Holiday Spectacular at the end of the initiative, the concept expanded to include a scripted feel for each of the events leading up to the November/December finale. The campaign began in February with a casting call for models. The March kick-off was a stunning display of energy, empowerment, and education. Each month is a new "act" with events sponsored by a different HealthQuest partner with the models "performing" every day on trails, at parks and in gyms throughout the Quiet Corner.

"It's the models who are bringing the story of *Follow the Fifty* to life," said Colangelo. "They've made it highly visual and emotionally-charged. Every day they are out there in their red t-shirts leading the way to inspire each other and the community to be heart healthy. They're sharing their stories and supporting each other on our blog and telling the world about it via Facebook. We knew that capturing their journey on film would be an important component to share with a larger audience."

One such story is in the way that the campaign proved to be another important "find" for one of the models. Dawna Sirard was born and raised in Connecticut by her adopted family. She answered the FTF casting call for models after learning that her biological mother died at the age of 54 from heart disease. Sirard, an accomplished independent filmmaker, immediately volunteered her talents to document the campaign in video.

"Heart disease took my biological mother before I had a chance to meet her," said Sirard. "I'm doing this to stress the importance of being healthy and thus present in the lives of the people we love."

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One of the highlights at the recent FTF kick-off event was the debut of the launch video produced by Sirard and Colangelo, which featured dramatic and emotional vignettes of FTF models each telling their own personal stories. Campaign partner Westview Health Care Center provided space for Sirard to film the model interviews. Still footage was captured at Day Kimball Healthcare, a HealthQuest partner; and members of Putnam EMS Ambulance Service served as photography subjects.

As the campaign unfolds, Sirard will capture the progress of the models in videos that will be featured on the FTF website and the HealthQuest Northeast CT YouTube Channel. Sirard will also compile the footage into a short film that will document the models' journey of heart health. It will be premiered at the Red Dress Divas Holiday Spectacular marking the finale for the grant initiative that has been funded by the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health.

Follow the Fifty is also collaborating with David T. Panteleakos, owner of Broadway Live Productions, who will serve as the director for the Red Dress Divas Holiday Spectacular that will take place at the HYDE Cultural Center on November 30th and December 1st. The holiday production is the latest collaboration between Panteleakos and Colangelo. The two have worked together for many years with Broadway Live production staff, skilled actors, and talented musical partners to generate over \$500,000 in gross ticket sales with all net proceeds benefiting local and national charities.

"I am truly honored to be working with so many talented individuals on this worthwhile and meaningful public health endeavor," said Panteleakos, who is also CEO of Westview Health Care Center, in Dayville, CT. "The interest and energy surrounding this campaign are amazing; we can't wait to bring all of it to the stage."

Panteleakos also heads up the Broadway Live video team that is producing vignettes featuring "Ruby," a red dress introduced at the kick-off that will be brought to life by actress Alison Stewart. "Ruby represents every woman out there living her life, juggling all her roles and responsibilities and will serve as a visual reminder that we need to keep our heart health first in everything we do and everywhere we go," said Colangelo.

James Doran Kellaway rounds out the Broadway Live Productions video team. Kellaway, who is credited with naming the "Ruby" character, graduated from Hobart College with a degree in Studio Art. While he has found many canvases for his work, Kellaway developed a genuine love for the canvas of film. "The development of the Ruby character is something we are having a lot of fun with and it's clear that the models are already emotionally connecting to her," said Kellaway. "It's a tremendous project and I'm so grateful to be included in this creative collaboration. I have always tried to be a leader, but in this case, I jumped at the chance to *Follow the Fifty*."

All video content created and produced on behalf of *Follow the Fifty* campaign will be posted to the HealthQuest channel on YouTube as well as the FTF website. For more information, contact NDDH at 860-774-7350 or email contactus@followthefifty.org.

About *Follow the Fifty: Models of Heart Health*

Follow the Fifty is 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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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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