



HEART DISEASE DOESN'T CARE WHAT YOU WEAR—IT'S THE #1 KILLER OF WOMEN®

THE RED DRESS® IS THE NATIONAL SYMBOL FOR WOMEN AND HEART DISEASE AWARENESS

## ***THE HEART TRUTH*® PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### ***The Heart Truth*® : Heart Disease is the #1 Killer of Women**

*The Heart Truth* is that of the women who died in 2010 (the most current year for which data are available), 1 in 4 died from heart disease, and most failed to make the connection between risk factors—such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol—and their personal risk of developing heart disease.

### ***The Heart Truth*: Serious Messages about Women's Heart Health**

*The Heart Truth*, sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health, is a national education program for women that raises awareness about heart disease and its risk factors and educates and motivates them to take action to prevent the disease. Through the program, launched in 2002, the NHLBI leads the Nation in a landmark heart health movement embraced by millions who share the common goal of better heart health for all women.

The centerpiece of *The Heart Truth* is the *Red Dress*SM, which was created by the NHLBI and introduced as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness in 2002. *The Red Dress*® is a powerful red alert that inspires women to learn more about their personal risk for heart disease and take action to protect their heart health.

*The Heart Truth* is a science-based health education program built on a strong foundation of formative research. Informed by health behavior and health communications theory, the program's underlying strategy is to implement a brand-driven social marketing mix of national programming and community interventions to raise awareness of heart disease and drive behavior change among the primary target audience—American women ages 40 to 60. The program's objectives recognize the critical need to eliminate health inequities by placing an emphasis on reaching African American and Hispanic women with heart health awareness messages and science-based public education information.

### **Program Background**

*The Heart Truth* began in response to recommendations of more than 70 experts in women's health who met in March 2001 to develop a national action plan to reduce the toll of heart disease on American women. The program was developed with input from partner organizations and focus groups with women conducted across the country. This research revealed that most women underestimate their personal risk and do not fully understand the devastating impact that heart disease has on one's life and family. The research strongly supported the urgent need to tell women about their risk of heart disease and how to lower it.

### **What's a Red Dress Got to Do With It?**

*The Red Dress* was designed to build awareness that women are at risk for heart disease, and motivate them to take action to reduce their risk. The creative concept of a *Red Dress* tested well with diverse women who cited its ability to get attention, convey the seriousness of heart disease, and change the perception that it is only a man's issue.



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The symbol links a woman's focus on her "outer self" to the need to also focus on her "inner self," especially her heart health. *The Red Dress* serves as a red alert to convey the message that "Heart Disease Doesn't Care What You Wear—It's the #1 Killer of Women.® "

Seeking to advance the symbol, *The Heart Truth* forged a groundbreaking collaboration between the Federal government and the fashion industry, an industry intrinsically tied to female audiences. As a result of this partnership, fashion leaders—including top designers, models, and celebrities—have demonstrated their support for the issue of women and heart disease by participating in *The Heart Truth's* Red Dress Collections at New York's Fashion Week annually since 2003.

### National Wear Red Day®

*The Heart Truth* and many individuals and organizations celebrate National Wear Red Day on the first Friday of February each year. Through local community events and awareness activities, thousands across the country wear red to unite in the national movement to give women a personal and urgent wake-up call about their risk for heart disease. National Wear Red Day serves as a reminder to every woman to care for her heart, because heart disease is the #1 killer of women. On this day men and women can participate by wearing a red dress, shirt, tie, or the Red Dress Pin.

### Program Resources and Activities

The program offers a wide variety of resources to reach individuals and local communities with *The Heart Truth*, messages, including:

- Suite of **educational materials and marketing materials**, including a wallet card, 100-plus page *Healthy Heart Handbook for Women* brochure, speaker's kit, and audience-specific fact sheets.
- **Website**, which includes resources, and a National Wear Red Day Online Toolkit.
- **Online tools**, such as program imagery and messaging; infographics; healthy action community badges; and Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest accounts that provide a number of tools and resources as well as a forum for people to discuss heart disease in women.
- **Community programs**, such as *The Heart Truth* Champions program, supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health, and *The Heart Truth* Community Action Program sponsored by the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health.
- **Community Partnerships** with national non-profit organizations reinforced at the local level to extend the program's reach and messages.
- **Corporate partnerships** to expand the reach of *The Heart Truth* message, including collaborations with Burlington, Charles P. Rogers, Jimmy Beans Wool, and WomenCertified, among others.
- **Women of color and faith-based initiatives** with organizations such as The Links, Inc., National Black Nurses Association, the Association of Black Cardiologists, and National Coalition of Pastors' Spouses.



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### **Making A Difference**

*The Heart Truth* is one of the Nation's most successful and impactful public health education initiatives. The program has contributed to an increased awareness among women that heart disease is their leading cause of death—a 2012 American Heart Association survey showed that such awareness nearly doubled over the past 12 years, from 30 percent to 56 percent. *The Red Dress* symbol has achieved broad recognition and engaged the support of a significant portfolio of national- and local-level partners that contribute to achieving *The Heart Truth's* goal. The NHLBI's research and resulting science-based public health messaging and materials are helping women across the country learn to recognize their personal risk for heart disease and take action to protect their heart health.

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