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Learning a heart-felt lesson

■ Lifetime TV films three women enrolled in local hospital's cardiovascular health program.

By Jackson Bell, The Leader

MEDIA DISTRICT WEST — Jean De Lucia's path to better heart health isn't just a private matter between her and her cardiologists. Soon, it will be a nationally televised event.

De Lucia, a 46-year-old heart attack survivor, will appear in the Lifetime Television reality series "Speaking of Women's Health" at 11 a.m. today on Charter Communications Channel 51. The show's one-hour episode, the "Get Healthy Challenge," focuses on the experiences of De Lucia and two other women with heart disease when they were enrolled in Providence St. Joseph Medical Center's Cardiac Risk Screening Program.

After suffering a heart attack last year, De Lucia agreed to join the eight-week program and allow cameras to follow her as she met with physicians, exercised and improved her diet.

"I did it for my health and it was a shot at getting my act together, but it is also my 15 minutes of fame," she said. "And the hospital paid for everything. So if nothing else, I got healthy out of the deal."

De Lucia, who is diabetic and about 20 pounds overweight, was a smoker

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when the filming began in early March. One of her cardiologists, Cynthia Thaik, convinced her to quit her 16-year habit two weeks into the program.

Cardiologists guided the three patients through the program as they had various health tests and met with specialists to learn about proper diet, exercise and how to take medication.

"Even though none [of the televised patients] made a significant change in their weight, when we tested them on the treadmill, they were in so much better cardiovascular shape," said Thaik, a cardiologist who co-heads Foothill Cardiology, an offshoot of Providence St. Joseph Medical Center.

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer among women, and a recent survey revealed that only 46% of women are aware of that, officials said. In comparison, one-in-26 women die of breast cancer and one-in-three from heart disease.

"Our goal is to get to women before any heart disease manifests in hopes that they will focus more on exercise, weight and sugar and cholesterol levels," said David Sato, a cardiologist at the helm of Foothill Cardiology.

For information on the program, call (888) 432-5464.

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