

SEEKERS OF RUBBER-CHICKEN CHARITY EVENTS... Need Not Attend.

Which is to say, anyone looking for a group of; courageous, intelligent, enterprising and powerful women... *Come On In.*

This is a group of people with a mission, a cause and tremendous heart which is concurrent with their intention to embolden women to stand at the helm of their lives so they can live them, stroke and heart-disease free.



Attend the lunches, the breakfasts, or sign up for their information-rich **Go Red For Women**® newsletter as some 1.6 million women (give or take a few thousand) have done. Check out the free cardiac disease assessment tools provided by The American Heart Association. Oh, and be aware that you will be interacting with other strong and highly capable women whose stories will mirror your own--whatever it may be--and that will be the start of something wonderful for you.

As a group, women are often considered affectionate, caring, concerned and kind, though not always toward ourselves. That's where we need to re-think our priorities. You may have heard me speak of "the power of having a posse" in previous articles. I believe--for women--context is everything. So how about a posse of millions? I know we need our personal peeps as well and I will get to that. However, for now, imagine that there is a killer on the loose and it has your mother, sister, friends, daughter and grandmother in its sights. You would move heaven and earth to protect them, it's likely you would even take the monster on, face-to-face. Well, here's your chance.

Embolden women to stand at the helm of their lives so they can live them stroke and heart-disease free.

Your **Go Red For Women**® girls would have your back, explaining that this implacable foe is more deadly than all types of cancer. They would make certain you understood it carries the shocking title of the #1 Killer of Women. They would tell you there are ways to stop it in its tracks and they would walk and talk with you while you learned what you needed to know. Then, they would tell you that they're doing this because *you* are their mother, sister, friend, daughter or grandmother and they want you to remain so--they'd really rather you stay alive.

The **Go Red For Women**® web site has a brilliantly funny video primer on the subject that takes precisely 2 minutes and 54 seconds to watch. I'm fairly certain you'll agree with the 2,864,893 people who've viewed it so far. It's going to be absolute murder on the heart-disease killer. Go to <http://www.goredforwomen.org/>, scroll down and click on, "just a *little* heart attack"



Go Red For Women™ presents: 'Just a Little Heart Attack'
by **OfficialGoRed4Women** • 1 year ago • 2,864,893 views
Starring and directed by Emmy-nominated actress **Elizabeth Banks**. "A little film"
CC

Mia Schipani – Dancing With the Stars 2012



Personal Peeps

So what does a gorgeous woman in lime-green fringe have to do with **Go Red For Women*** and finding your inner peeps?

Flashback

It's the mid-1990's, the height of the .com boom. Millions are being made and everyone is maniacally busy. In Manhattan, Mia Schipani leveraged the opportunity by creating UrbanSpa15, a wellness company offering a menu of services including--massage, communication coaching, work/life balance information, self-defense, even yoga at your desk--all in 15 minute bytes.

Mia explains, "I put my entire savings account into the business and funded it for three years. This

was it, I was convinced I was going to be the next Oprah Winfrey. I was visualizing it all; I had my own show, I would write books and I would be famous." Then the .com became a .bomb, and she had to find a job.

Flash-forward

Stamford, Connecticut, 2003. Mia was recruited by The American Heart Association to participate in a brainstorming-style focus group. This pilot group consisted of female thought leaders; the goal was to discern how to reach out to other women in leadership roles who could help share crucial information about women and heart health. The answer was, that there didn't really seem to be a viable answer. So Mia decided to re-create a strategy she had first used to great benefit in New York back in 1999. Women's Leadership Breakfasts.

Imagine that there is a killer on the loose and it has your mother, sister, friends, aunt, daughter, and grandmother it its sights.

"Mia Schipani is someone who really put Go Red For Women on the map in Fairfield County," says Potoula Gjidiija. "She stepped in and owned her role in this movement." Potoula was Regional Director of Go Red For Women for Fairfield and Westchester County during its formative years. She and Mia formed a dynamic duo, building a series of Leadership Events, for women - by women, to inform and inspire them to become their own best advocates.

“Mia’s genius was in positioning Go Red For Women as a lifestyle. Go Red was a call-to-action for women to choose to live from the heart and for their heart, authentically.” she explains. “Through her, we connected to senior level women executives with relevant programs. We created value in those relationships by offering actionable information from professional development to personal empowerment.”

Clearly, professional women are hungry for knowledge, connection, empowerment. If that phrase sounds hackneyed, overused, there’s a reason. Women *still* have to dance twice as fast to make half the impact in terms of dollars, power and respect. Information sharing is a powerful step toward leveling the playing field. So is a solid support system. Men might collectively flinch if you defined the traditional *good ole’ boys club* as a support-group, but that’s pretty much what it is. And it works really, really well.

With a stellar panel of top female pacesetters; a CEO of Pitney Bowes, a psychiatrist, the Chief of Diversity and National Business Officer for Morgan Stanley, as well as a career coach and author, Mia’s very first event attracted 171 participants. A full decade down the line, they’re still going strong.

“The reality of heart health is holistic,” says Mia. “We’re dealing with the cause of the disease as well as the symptoms. Heart disease is about managing stress and taking care of yourself. The whole work/life balance thing. It’s about assuming personal responsibility for your life. As a professional with any level of business accountability, you have multiple stressors; financial, personal, familial. You have to know how to manage it so it doesn’t make you sick or kill you.”

The subject of authenticity remains a through-line for the various topics at Women’s Leadership Events because Mia’s experience has confirmed her belief that women are natural leaders, better than men. It isn’t a bias, it is an informed observation. She wants women to embrace that strength. Authentic leadership is not top-down or bottom-up. It is about creating a high-functioning team. To do that, every member of the group needs to assess their goals, personally and professionally.



“Women who attend these events come to be educated in a wide range of topics and they come to hear the latest Thought Leadership concepts. These breakfasts are an opportunity to connect with others who are on a similar level, to make new contacts. I facilitate connection among senior level professional women from all over Fairfield County.”

Through the course of our conversation, it becomes clear that Mia is one of those individuals who can dowse for opportunity and then make the best use of it once found. It is a natural talent, but the skill-set required to employ that ability is something she spent years cultivating. That knowledge is pure gold and she is more than willing to share it.

So this is where we address how to create your posse, your peeps, whatever noun you want to use. The functionality of the group is to mirror for each individual; appreciation for their talent and ability as well as acknowledgement of the real-world difficulties encountered in business and life. As any member in good standing of the *good ole' boys club* could tell you, relationship is everything. Nobody knows that better than Mia. It is the gospel she preaches and she is a stunning example of how well it works.

Can You Say 10,000?

“When I moved to Stamford ten years ago, I didn’t have a single contact in Connecticut. But I knew from experience you have to surround yourself with people who are smarter than you are, who are wiser and more mature than you are, people you can learn from.”

That was a lesson she learned the hard way. Mia had been through a tough divorce that left her reeling. She became aware that the breakdown was in their communication which, she laughs ruefully, “Is ironic because I graduated at the graduated top of my class in communications in college, so I never thought I had a problem communicating.” She took 100 steps backward and thought again.

In her hometown of Brooklyn, Mia had an amazing, loving support system based on relationships she had developed and nurtured throughout her life. How was she going to recreate that in Connecticut? She did what she’s supremely good at doing – she created the opportunity to meet great women and then followed through. The **Go Red For Women**® Leadership Breakfasts are a wellspring of smart, knowledgeable, resourceful women. To date, Mia has created a database of over 10,000 people. Not just names and addresses mind you. Meaningful, sustainable relationships. Valuable, strong connections.

“This is a big piece of networking,” she said, hands extended upward in emphasis, “this is a big piece of potential success. Some people say they have 10,000 people in their data base, but I can tell you my contacts’ middle name, the name of their dog, or where they went to school because I take the time to ask questions. I know their employment history, their favorite ice-cream. I develop a relationship from the get-go.”

Mia sources people and interweaves them into a tapestry of inter-functionality. “When I meet someone, I consider what I have to offer them and what they have to offer me. If there is no obvious connection then I ask myself, who can I connect this person with?” Her intention is to galvanize women into action - - that is the motivation underlying everything she does.

When people ask her how she can be Vice President of Business Development, Marketing and Public Relations for RMS Construction, LLC, lead organizer of the Leadership Breakfasts (which take more than 40 hours of research, interviewing and coaching) while participating in Dancing with the Stars Benefit for the Stamford Community Theatre and acting as a board member for five different for charities, among other activities, she takes a rare deep breath, and says, “By doing it. The more you do, the more you 4

can do. When people ask me, who do you admire? I tell them I love women in leadership, I like powerful women who are that way because of confidence and intelligence. Not only book-smart but emotionally intelligent.”

Toward that end, Mia became a mentor to a 13 year old Mexican-American girl. Her intention is to provide this “not-a-little-girl but not-yet-a-young-lady”, with the discoveries and tools she herself learned along the way and which--had they been available--would have been very useful methodologies in terms of crafting the life she wanted.

You Go Red!

Inspiration, education, connections and revelations are inherent in every Go Red event. Perhaps none more so than the 10th Anniversary Luncheon celebration I was privileged to attend in February of this year. One of the speakers took my breath away. She was 12 years old with the poise and the equanimity of a seasoned professional. Maybe it was the fact that she had received a heart transplant three years earlier. Or that she had experienced how precious each moment of life truly was as she grew weaker and weaker, waiting for a donor heart. Lauren Shields’ gratitude for life and for the doctors who helped save her was profound. Everyone in the room was moved. Mia’s mentee was inspired. “I want to be a doctor,” she told Mia. “I know what it feels like to be a doctor now and that’s what I want to do.”

“That’s what she took away from the experience,” said Mia,” grinning from ear to ear. “Up to that point she had no idea what she wanted to do but watching Lauren on that stage, in front of a room full of amazing women struck a chord for her – she’s more eager to explore herself, to investigate her own abilities and inclinations.”

Which sums up rather nicely the combined mission of Go Red and the message from Mia; *Confidence is key, education makes you strong, the best force for women, is women.*



Mia as Narrator with the cast of *The Vagina Monologues*