

PATTY DUMPLIN

your heart saviour
Patty Dumplin is just who you need to help you get heart healthy this year!

Pump Patty Dumplin's heart is as big as her beloved Jamaica. With her shopping trolley and rolling gait, she's become a familiar and much-loved sight on the streets of Nottingham, greeting everyone she passes in perfect patois.

For everyone knows a Patty Dumplin – the auntie who never takes her hat and coat off, who always sings the loudest in church, or the woman next to you in the shop who insists on telling you how to cook the best rice and peas.

But underneath the clever comedy lies a serious message on heart health coming across in a unique way thanks to a talented performer who is spreading that message in a city where heart disease remains the biggest killer.

Patty is a pioneering project from the British Heart Foundation (BHF), launched last year to highlight the well-documented facts that those from African and Caribbean backgrounds are most at risk of having high blood pressure or a stroke, and among the highest risk for type-2 diabetes of all the ethnic groups in the UK.

Many in the African Caribbean community already know this, but what are they doing about it? This is where Patty – and her shopping trolley come rolling along.

Patty is played by Lisa Jackson, of Monolisa Productions, a skilled theatre practitioner whose motto is 'out of one woman, many voices'.



BHF gave Lisa a free rein to draw on her Jamaican heritage and create the perfect lovable auntie who makes people laugh – but they walk away remembering her wise words that heart disease is both treatable and preventable.

Patty's character was 'road tested' at a Hearts & Minds event last June hosted by BHF and delivered by local organisations Bright Ideas Nottingham, the African Caribbean Health Network (ACHN), BME Cancer Communities and Kemet FM, a community radio station with 50,000 listeners.

Since then, she's been involved in the launch of 'Come Nyam Wid Mi', a project highlighting healthy cooking tips based at Caribbean restaurants across Nottingham. During the sessions everyone is made aware of the hidden dangers of high-salt, processed foods, the importance of exercise, and the risks of having a large waist.

Patty has also braved the all-male domain of The Ultimate Barber's Shop, where she has shaken her booty, but delivered wise words too, telling amused customers she has lost 'one half of rock stone' by eating healthily.

She's been a star turn at the popular 'Reggaerobics' sessions started last year where classes have now been extended at the New Art Exchange and The Vine Community Centre. Two life-saving resuscitation training sessions attracted 250 people and during National Heart Health Month in February, an Audience with Patty Dumplin fundraiser at Nottingham Contemporary Gallery raised £1,700. It also showcased artistes such as Jimbole, Ram-One and Percy Dread.

Patty is proud that she is a Love Heart, a volunteer who works closely with BHF staff to spread the health



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message. This year she will even recruit Love Heart volunteers herself. There's no doubt, the healthy message is getting through as the BHF has received a lot of feedback from Nottingham, thanks to Patty and her wise words.

Ali Orhan, BME communities project manager, said, "We are delighted to be working with Patty Dumplin in Nottingham to help people from African Caribbean communities look after their heart and reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease.

"It can sometimes be difficult to reach some communities and get them interested in their health, but by raising awareness in a humorous way, Patty has managed to dispel common

myths associated with heart disease and proves practical hints and tips reduce risks by adopting healthy lifestyle habits."

For Lisa, who started writing at the age of seven, and was mentored by Jean Binta Breeze, the first female dub poet, Patty is now a large part of her life and she has clearly put her heart and soul into creating her. She's a familiar character on radio voice-overs, at Nottingham Carnival and out and about in the community.

"The beauty of Patty is that I know people who don't know it's actually me," says Lisa, who is based at the Antenna Media Centre, and whose family on her father's side hails from Clarendon.

She is also working on a one-woman comedy called *The Wedding*, to be staged in July at Nottingham Playhouse, which will also include plenty of Jamaican patois and proverbs.

"I see myself as a social chameleon, but I feel I can hear the voice of my grandmother talking through Patty. She communicates to all ages – in fact many of the older generation believe she is real, especially when she starts quoting from the Bible."

She added, "I'm planning to produce a play around Patty and I really feel she could go national and be rolled out in other UK cities with high African Caribbean communities. My dream would be for Patty to meet Matt Lucas' Precious, the character from *Little Britain!*" Now that indeed would be something! 

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