**Contact: SallyAnne McCartin,** **sallyannemccartin@taketheleadwomen.com**

 **860/435-6464**

**For Immediate Release:**

**Philanthropist Nancy O’Reilly and Industry Leaders From CBS Entertainment Diversity & Inclusion and HBO Support 50 Women Change the World in Media and Entertainment**

**Signature program of nonprofit Take The Lead Builds Powerful Cohort of Women Learning to Tackle Leadership in New Ways**

(Los Angeles, CA)—A leading philanthropist and writer, Nancy O’Reilly, is united with cable giant HBO and CBS in supporting **50 Women Can Change the World in Media and Entertainment**, an innovative program of leadership nonprofit **Take The Lead**. The four-month immersive is tackling gender imbalance in the entertainment industry with a dynamic group of women representing every aspect of the media and entertainment business. During the intensive’s duration, the group is working together through Take The Lead’s curriculum and attending a variety of presentations, webinars, and screenings.

Philanthropist **Nancy O’Reilly,** an early supporter, believes strongly that the program is critical. In greeting the fifty women chosen to be part of the 2018 program she spoke of the importance of the history of this group and she urged them to see their participation in big ways:

“This will make the way girls and women see themselves in films and in what they hear and what they read. We buy 85% of products and services in the US and we are over 55% of the population. Why don’t we have control of the marketplace? Women feel guilty and depressed by the images they are supposed to emulate and be. The measures are impossible to match. Girls and women, as well as boys and men, need positive uplifting visuals to make them feel good and empowered. This amazing group of women can help to change all that.

When I got my first, and only, Barbie doll I knew I could and would not look like her. I became the ultimate tomboy to avoid that kind of ridicule and embarrassment. Kicking a ball as far as I could made a lot more sense. Love marriage and three daughters changed all that. I made a vow to help my daughters to not feel as I had as a girl: that I was not good enough if I wasn’t thin, beautiful, and young and looked like the women often seen in magazines that were set by the check-out stands in every retail store. I had to empower myself first before I could help another woman to do the same thing. That was, and is, my mantra: to help women feel empowered to live their lives fully and to use their voices to change the world for good. This is also the challenge I make to each one of you.”

Industry leaders CBS Entertainment Diversity & Inclusion and HBO are supporters as well. "Take The Lead works diligently to put more women on the map, and the #50WomenCan initiative further empowers them to tell their stories, said **Tiffany Smith-Anoa’i, CBS, EVP, Entertainment Diversity, Inclusion & Communications**. “We’re proud to stand behind their mission of reaching gender parity in the industry and seeing more women-led content on the screen.”

Dovetailing with efforts from organizations like TimesUp to correct the historic imbalance of power experienced by women, the 50 Women Can Change The World program is deeply pragmatic delivering tactics and skills—a toolkit—women can put to work in their individual careers. Developed by activist and author Gloria Feldt, from her acclaimed book **No Excuses:** **9 Ways Women Can Change How We Think about Power**, the curriculum material has been used to help thousands of women shift into leadership positions.

The idea behind the initiative is build incubators within industries and networks of burgeoning women leaders who across companies can support each other in their fields and careers. At the heart is the idea of the group of women as a cohort—a leadership network forged through the four-month course.

The Fifty Women Can Change the World in Media and Entertainment, as well as the Fifty Women Can Change The World in Philanthropy in Arizona, will soon be joined by additional 50 Women Can Change The World contingents focused on women in journalism, healthcare, and other fields.

The 50 Women Can Change The World in Media and Entertainment hold their gatherings at **Mount Saint Mary’s University**, a partner with Take The Lead. A one-year collaborative research study assessing the impact and efficacy of the 50 Women Can Change the World in Media and Entertainment is in the planning stages.

**Emerald Archer, Ph.D., Director of the Center for the Advancement of Women at Mount Saint Mary’s University,** says of this working relationship: “We are proud to partner with the 50 Women Can Change the World initiative. We are dedicated to leveling the playing field so that women across industries can experience gender parity. The entertainment industry is no exception. This initiative, along with our work with students in the Mount Saint Mary’s Film, Media, and Social Justice program, will shape the new leadership, redefine power, and transform the industry to be more gender equitable. We can’t wait to see how this first cohort of leaders changes the landscape for women in entertainment.”

Neue House has hosted the two early gatherings because as Membership Director, Hollywood, Ramona Orley says, “NeueHouse is a community of entrepreneurs and creative leaders. Our workspaces are designed to inspire new ideas, encourage new connections and provoke fresh perspectives. We're excited to partner with Take The Lead's #50WomenCan for a series of panels, screenings, and salons. “

To further enrich the experiences of this group, Program Directors Tabby Biddle and Elisa Parker have also enlisted a number of strategic partners including Seed&Spark and The Representation Project. Their goal: to engage individuals and organizations whose fresh and innovative approaches to both business and movement building offer new perspectives and approaches. “Women forging this alliance is a game changer. We wanted to be sure to share the voices of those who are creating new solutions and approaches to issues confronting women in this field.”

**Emily Best, founder & CEO of Seed&Spark** reflected on why she decided to help: "I started Seed&Spark because of the experience I had trying to get a movie made and seen about women I recognized and identified with. What I learned was that the lack of diversity and inclusion in entertainment was a telltale sign of a broken business model - one that was not serving more than half the US population in a satisfying way. The #50WomenCan initiative is about so much more than gender parity: it's about the long-term health and well-being of our entire industry and our culture. In order for companies like Seed&Spark to be successful, we need #50WomenCan to be successful as well."

For **Tolu Lawrence, Director of Strategic Leadership at The Representation Project**, her organization was drawn to the underlying premise of the project: to ensure that the stories we tell are reflective of the whole range of human experience: "The Representation Project is proud to partner with #50WomenCan to close the gender gap in Hollywood, media, and entertainment. If we want a culture that celebrates individuals for their whole selves, we need media makers to reflect the diverse world we live in and tell 360-degree stories that represent the full complexity of the human experience. To do otherwise risks perpetuating limiting stereotypes. Initiatives like #50WomenCan are integral to shaping perception and consequently, culture.”

###

For additional information on the program, please contact Elisa Parker at elisa@seejanedo.com