

## **Press Release**

**Release: For Immediate Release**

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### **run,jane,run...One Weekend...Something for Everyone!**

This week Natalie Cole publicly announced that she is battling Hepatitis C. She attributed her diagnosis to her extensive drug use. Hepatitis C is a contagious liver disease that results from infection with the hepatitis C virus.

The Women's Center of Greater Cleveland is a state certified drug and alcohol treatment for women and her children. "In the past few years, we are seeing an increasing volume of women that have been diagnosed with Hepatitis C," said Mary Jane Chichester, Executive Director. An estimated 4.1 million (1.6%) Americans have been infected with HCV, of whom 3.2 million are chronically infected.

- Most infections are due to injection drug use.
- Transfusion-associated cases occurred prior to blood donor screening but now occurs in less than one per 2 million transfused units of blood.

Denise is a client of the Women's Center. She began using drugs at the age of 19 and her drug of choice was crack cocaine. With nearly four months of recovery, Denise admits that she engaged in prostitution in exchange for drugs, food and housing. It can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious, lifelong illness. Hepatitis C is usually spread when blood from a person infected with the hepatitis C virus enters the body of someone who is not infected. Most people become infected with the hepatitis C virus by sharing

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needles or other equipment to inject drugs. Chronic hepatitis C is a serious disease than can result in long-term health problems, or even death.

“The Women’s Center like most drug and alcohol treatment facilities views addiction as a progressive and life threatening disease like diabetes and even cancer,” said Chichester. Denise responded to the query asking her how she felt as some may refer to addiction as a choice, she said “As a little girl, I dreamed of being a nurse, doctor or teacher. I never wanted to be a crack addict. Addiction is not a choice. Denise did explain that with her sobriety she now has choices to stay away the people, places and things that enabled her to use.

August 15 -17<sup>th</sup>, the Women’s Center is hosting the 20<sup>th</sup> annual run,jane,run sports festival featuring a women’s golf tournament and a 10k and 5k run at Edgewater Park. The proceeds of run,jane,run benefit the Women’s Center to provide drug and alcohol treatment services for medically women and families. The mission of The Women’s Center is to, “*provide opportunities for women to take greater control over their lives – physically, emotionally, and economically.*” The Women’s Center provides the following programs and services:

- Morning, afternoon and evening intensive outpatient substance abuse treatment services for medically indigent women;
- Childcare services for mothers engaged in treatment services;
- Parenting classes and family violence counseling;
- Family counseling emphasizing reunification of the family unit.

For more information please visit our website at [www.womensctr.org](http://www.womensctr.org) or call 216-651-1450.