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Huntington's Disease fundraiser will be a 'blast'

BY JULIE SLADER
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The Huntington's Disease Society of America, a national non-profit agency, will host the annual Celebration of Hope Friday at 7 p.m.

The "shaken, not stirred" Martini Blast theme will unite individuals concerned with promoting the efforts of the HDSA and its 36 chapters nationwide. Each year, the organization works diligently to raise awareness and funding for Huntington's Disease, a devastating genetic disorder triggered by the degeneration of brain cells.

Sheri Nash, president of the Central Ohio Chapter of HDSA, said chapters are strategically placed throughout the nation, in order to accommodate and assist families in need.

"This really is a rare disease, and not many people know what it is, since there's not a strong name recognition. But, to the families who have it, it's not rare, and that's why there is such a passion behind this event," said Nash.

The Columbus Chapter of the HDSA, The Center of Excellence, is located at The Ohio State University Medical Center, and has served those suffering with the illness throughout Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana and Michigan for the past 38 years. The chapter depends on the Celebration of Hope to raise \$50,000 a year, to provide the resources and funding for specialized treatments.

The Center of Excellence provides a dedicated staff of doctors, social workers and counselors, aimed at providing support to anyone suffering, or affiliated with someone who has HD. The organization also administers routine medical examinations for individuals concerned that they may have the genetic disease.

Nash, who is at risk for HD, said the dis-

ease is devastating because it evolves into a terrible conglomeration of other symptoms, similar to Parkinson's and Alzheimer's Disease.

Megan Pringle, of WSYX Channel 6/WTTE Fox 28, will preside as the master of ceremonies, and pay homage to HD Humanity Awards recipients Mickey Halls, general manager of Rich Products, and The Elsie Znamenacek family for their generosity and ongoing effort toward finding a cure.

The festivities will be held at The Vault, 35 E. Gay St., and will include entertainment by Michael Sutherland, who will perform a string of Frank Sinatra, "Rat Pack," inspired classics.

Guests will be able to participate in both silent and live auctions while enjoying an assortment of cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. The cocktail menu will feature Three Olives vodka, and will include the classic, apple, dirty and chocolate martinis, along with an array of signature drinks.

Items to be raffled include a 30-inch flat screen TV, Ohio State University vs. Northwestern University football tickets and a "Circle of Life" diamond pendant.

Dawn Martin, chair of the Celebration for Hope, said the Martini Blast inevitably will be an exciting evening, and said she is optimistic that it will garner enough support to continue the Center of Excellence and its ongoing achievements.

"This isn't going to be a sad event, it's going to be energetic! Our purpose is to achieve a greater public knowledge of the disease, and get people involved with our local chapter," said Martin.

Tickets for the event are \$125 and can be purchased by calling 614-460-8800, or at the door. For additional information on HDSA, and its commitment toward finding a cure for Huntington's Disease, visit www.hdsacentralohio.org.