

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ATTENTION:

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**Media story ideas:
Scleroderma and Women's Health Month**

1. ***Illness Inspires Action:*** Three women in metro Detroit suffering from **scleroderma** have decided to make each day count by doing something about their illness. They have become co-chairwomen of the Scleroderma Foundation Michigan Chapter's **26th 'Stepping Out to Cure Scleroderma' Walk and Run** to be held on **Sunday, June 12, 2005 at Shain Park in downtown Birmingham, MI**. Lisa Simpson of South Lyon, Annie Valle from Taylor and Sharon Noechel from Warren are all making a difference through their leadership and fundraising efforts so that more area charitable dollars can help people affected by scleroderma, a mysterious disease that primarily affects women. Thousands of women in our area may not even know they have the disease. With funding received through this Walk and Run, these women want to improve public awareness and garner much-needed research funding to improve treatment therapies and to find the cause and cure for scleroderma. These dynamic community leaders will tell you more about how their illness has inspired action.

2. ***Turning to Stone***: Follow a local woman with **scleroderma** as she makes it through the day with claw-like hands and pain most people would consider unbearable. People with scleroderma often say their disease progression feels like they are “turning to stone” little by little. Their skin tightens up around their faces, arms, legs – all over. Their joints start to ache and they can’t stay in one position very long without feeling like they might get stuck. Interview women with scleroderma in the metro area who are struggling with this debilitating disease that turns people to stone. What is this elusive disease called **scleroderma** and why does it strike predominantly women?
3. ***Research and women’s health***: Nationally, women’s health issues don’t get as much attention – or research dollars – as men’s health issues. With **scleroderma**, which attacks primarily women in the prime of their lives, the research money is slow in coming. Take a look at the discrepancies in local research dollars. Where is the big money going in metro Detroit and for what purpose? How do they add up gender-wise? Sidebar on different women’s illnesses including scleroderma and lupus with info on differences.
4. ***Faith and illness: Annie Valle of Taylor*** has been through a lot in her lifetime. She’s lived with unbearable pain, watched her once-athletic body turn into stone with claws for hands, and sat by helplessly as her mother passed from a similar autoimmune disease. Two of her five sisters have fibromyalgia and another might have scleroderma too. Through it all, she maintains her strong faith in God and knows that God doesn’t send people anything they can’t handle.