

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACT: Kathryn Sampson, Community Options Inc.  
(609) 352.5280 | [Kathryn.Sampson@comop.org](mailto:Kathryn.Sampson@comop.org)

## **Nashville Woman To Run in Nonprofit 5K Three Months After Heart Surgery**

PRINCETON, NJ – (January 23, 2015) Ashley Russell was born with Mitral Valve Prolapse, which is a common condition that is a life long disorder. After undergoing open-heart surgery in November, she will be participating in Cupid's Chase 5K in Nashville at Shelby Park on February 14 at 10 a.m.

Russell was officially diagnosed with a heart murmur in high school, when she began experiencing asthma-like symptoms during basketball season. Medical professionals told her it was something to keep an eye on, as it could get worse down the line. Russell never let it phase her, however, as she continued to be consistently active with horseback riding, running, yoga and various volunteering activities.

Her condition slowly got worse. Russell got married and started working full-time out of college. Her symptoms became a bit more prevalent, but Russell thought nothing of it, assuming that being out of shape was the main issue. During her first pregnancy, she experienced abnormally pregnancy symptoms, as she was ultimately diagnosed with preeclampsia. Russell had to undergo an emergency c-section, with her daughter Harper being born on February 19, 2013, as healthy as could be.

Russell suffered from post-partum depression as her family relocated to Tennessee from Ohio. She started doing Mommy & Me yoga with Harper to rejuvenate her mind and body. They would take walks in downtown Nashville, see the sights and even had the opportunity to watch their niece, Kennedy Blake, work on her music career.

The excitement and fresh start of Nashville had begun to wear off, replaced by fear in Russell's mind. She struggled to go through her daily walk without having to sit down on her path, hoping she wouldn't pass out. Her episodes became more frequent and would last longer. She met with a cardiologist in Nashville to get to the bottom of it. She learned that her condition had turned into Mitral Valve Regurgitation, developed an arrhythmia and enlarged heart. Ashley's heart had become leaky and blood was not pumped efficiently. She would routinely experience irregular heartbeats and her heart enlargement was a result of trying to cope with all of the stress from her valve not working properly.

On November 25, 2014, Ashley underwent minimal invasive open-heart surgery, as her medical team repaired her Mitral Valve through her ribs, without having to crack her chest. Within a few days, Russell felt a wave of energy in her body like she hadn't had since before high school.

Her post-op goal is to participate in Cupid's Chase 5K.

"I feel so incredibly lucky to have had such an amazing medical team and such supportive family. What better way to not only keep motivated through rehabilitation but also help raise awareness about a great organization and help bring in donations to help out a good cause."

Russell has worked hard everyday and is thrilled to have the opportunity to participate, help out and simply be able to run and live without fear or pain.

Cupid's Chase 5K Run will take place on Saturday, February 14, 2015 in 27 cities from New York to Arizona. For more information or to register for the event and to find the closest run near you, you can visit [www.comop.org/cupidschase/](http://www.comop.org/cupidschase/). To join Cupid's Chase on Facebook, you can visit, [www.facebook.com/cupidschase](http://www.facebook.com/cupidschase).

Every year, Community Options holds their annual 5K to raise money for the people they support, with all proceeds from the race going directly towards supporting people with disabilities in their local communities. Last year, Community Options raised over \$200,000 nationwide.

###

For over 25 years, Community Options has developed housing and employment programs for people with disabilities. Currently the 5<sup>th</sup> largest non-profit in New Jersey, Community Options operates with a budget over \$96 million and serves thousands of people with disabilities through 38 offices across 9 states. Providing advocacy assistance to empower people with disabilities, Community Options believes that all people –regardless of disability level – should live and work in the community with dignity, choice, and self-determination. A registered PVO with USAID, Community Options is also the pioneer of innovative programs for people with disabilities in the Middle East, Russia, and South America. Please visit our website at [www.comop.org](http://www.comop.org).

CEO available for comment. If you would like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview, please call (609) 352-5280 or e-mail Kathryn at [Kathryn.Sampson@comop.org](mailto:Kathryn.Sampson@comop.org)