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## **Networks team up to take on cancer**

### **Special to raise awareness and funds for cure**

By [ANNA STEWART](#)

Eight gutsy, smart women are standing up to cancer. The disease kills 1,500 Americans a day. Just ask producer Laura Ziskin. In 2004, she was diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer.

Or CBS anchor Katie Couric. Her husband, Jay Monahan, and sister, Emily, died of cancer.

Or producer Noreen Fraser. In 2004, she was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer.

Or Sherry Lansing, the chair of her own philanthropic foundation. Her mother died of ovarian cancer.

Or Entertainment Industry Foundation CEO Lisa Paulsen. She lost both parents to cancer.

Or philanthropist Ellen Ziffren. Her mother is a lymphoma survivor.

Or entrepreneur Rusty Robertson. Her mother died of lung cancer.

Or marketer Sue Schwartz. She lost her mother to multiple myeloma.

"If you put a headline on the front of the New York Times, '1,500 Americans Dead Today,' that would get everyone's attention," Ziskin says. "We'd say, 'This is a terrorist in our midst. Why aren't we doing something about it?'"

Ziskin and her friends in showbiz did do something about it. In the fall of 2007, Stand Up to Cancer was born. The purpose: to raise philanthropic dollars for research, knock down barriers that have inhibited collaboration and bring together the best scientists to work toward a cure.

"Lance Armstrong wrote a piece when Elizabeth Edwards had her reoccurrence," Ziskin recalls. "He said how great it was that there was this tremendous outpouring of sympathy for her. But nobody's mad. Nobody's mad that the reoccurrence of this disease is seen as a death sentence. Being in the same boat myself, I'm mad. I'm really mad."

Ziskin wanted to use the media in which she works to "tip the conversation" about cancer. That meant bringing together ABC, CBS and NBC for one hour of simultaneous primetime shows -- a task that was handed over to an influential dealmaker.

"Kenny Ziffren was our secret weapon," Lansing says. "Other than the 9/11 special, never have the networks put aside their rivalry and said, 'We're going to fund research for a disease whose time has come.' "

The nationally televised fundraising special airs Sept. 5, starting at 8 p.m. on both coasts. Hosted by news anchors Couric, Charles Gibson and Brian Williams, the night promises to "educate, move and inspire."

"It's not going to be me on CBS," Couric says. "It's going to be everybody on all three networks. We're going to forget the alphabet for this one night. Charlie, Brian and I will be focusing on some of the exciting breakthroughs that are going on so we can say, 'Hey, if we all give what we can, then we can raise serious money that will help move science forward.'"

Stay tuned. Ziskin & Co. are just beginning to tip the conversation.

"We're going to work together, damn it!" Robertson says. "It wasn't easy because we're all so strong. We run our own companies. But all of a sudden we're forced with making a group decision. But guess what? We did it!"

### **Dr. Ray Dubois**

In today's tough economy, even something as basic as cancer research has been hit hard.

"In recent years, cancer research funding is at an all-time low," says Dr. Ray Dubois, president of the American Assn. of Cancer Research. "The federal government has released less dollars to fund research, and we needed to find a way to fund the cancer mission."

Then, 18 months ago, AACR began having meetings with the people at Stand Up for Cancer. He had never known fund-raising at this level.

"We recently were able to raise \$2 million with the help of Stand Up for Cancer and Major League Baseball," he says. "Without Stand Up for Cancer, the money could not have been raised."

-- *Justin Kroll*

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