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## In Memory of Laura Ziskin: Her Legacy Lives On Through Stand Up to Cancer

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*"Laura was lightning in a bottle. A very strange combination of George Patton, a damsel in distress, and Vincent Van Gogh all rolled into one. An artistic, extremely smart, very goal-directed individual, who never lost her humor, her gentility or her ability to get the best out of anyone she was with. She was phenomenal."*

*--Dr. John Glaspy*

Nine years ago, when Laura Ziskin was diagnosed with stage-four breast cancer at age 53, she was alarmed, not just for her life but for her daughter, her beloved life partner, and her hard-earned career. What alarmed her even more than any of those things, though, was that her prognosis was no better in 2003 than it had been for women with her diagnosis 40 years prior. Naturally, Laura asked, "Why?"

As a tenacious and focused producer, Laura held close to her heart a well-known quotation by her famous predecessor, David O. Selznick: "Movies aren't made. They're forced into being." Laura knew that better outcomes for cancer patients must also be forced into being. She learned that conventional funding mechanisms for research had simply not yielded satisfactory results. In fact, every day in this country, 1,500 people die from cancer.

Laura became determined to make a change, not only in her own life but in the lives of cancer patients everywhere. She took the worst time in her life and used it to benefit everyone affected by this disease. In 2008, together with eight other influential women in the entertainment industry who had also been touched by cancer, Laura founded Stand Up to Cancer (SU2C).

Laura's intention was to quickly make cancer a first-tier issue in this country, as An Inconvenient Truth had done for climate change. To pull that off, she used all the chutzpah she had garnered in her amazing producing career to galvanize the media to help raise awareness and, most importantly, to help raise

funding. Next, she and the SU2C team brought together the best and the brightest in the cancer-research field, along with newcomers whose fresh perspectives held the potential to transform the arena.

For Laura, like any cancer patient, time was of the essence. "When you're diagnosed with cancer, and there's no effective treatment for you, you don't have 20 years to wait," she said. With her leadership SU2C flourished. In just three short years SU2C changed the way cancer research is done. Funds were awarded quickly, in large sums, to multidisciplinary "dream teams" of scientists, with the mandate that they publicly share results within relatively short timeframes.

To date SU2C has raised more than \$180 million for groundbreaking translational research, and more than 330 scientists from 68 institutions are working together. Thirty-four clinical trials have been already been initiated or completed, with another 14 planned. Patients are being treated, and promising results are being delivered, from the laboratory bench to the bedside of patients and back again. What started as an idea -- a dream, really -- has become a movement.

The courage and immediacy that Laura infused into everything she did continues to live on in all of us at Stand Up to Cancer. Because Laura Ziskin asked the question "why?" and acted on it, cancer research today is being done differently, all for the benefit of patients. Scientists are collaborating, and we are beginning to see results.

As a mentor, a colleague, and a friend, Laura is deeply missed. But as anyone who has lost a loved one to cancer knows, we must push on, and we must stand for the ones who can no longer stand for themselves. We stand in honor of Laura so that together, as one united force, we can continue funding science that will one day make everyone with cancer a survivor.

In honor of Laura's dream of a world without cancer, we stand for all of you, the millions affected by cancer every day.

Please join us in celebrating her amazing life by visiting Laura's star in the SU2C Constellation.