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Cancer survivor's positive work

Foundation: Doug Ulman, a Howard County native, and his family launched a support program for cancer survivors in the 15-to-35 age group

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Doug Ulman was a sophomore at Brown University when he was diagnosed with cancer in 1996.

His mother looked for a support group for people his age, but the only ones she could find were for young children and older adults.

So Ulman, a Howard County native, and his family launched a support program for cancer survivors in the 15-to-35 age group.

Since then the Ulman Cancer Found for Young Adults, in its seventh year, has gained national recognition for its wide ranging programs, including an information exchange network, support groups around the country, a documentary film and a course for pre-med students at Brown.

In September, representatives of the fund were invited to speak about their programs at a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conference in Atlanta. "It was a major accomplishment," said Brock Yetso, executive director of the fund.

Ulman, now 26, has survived three bouts with cancer. Ten months after his first surgery, for chronosarcoma—or tumors of the cartilage—Ulman was contacted by a young man who had the same surgery. "Talking to him was the single most helpful form of support that I found anywhere," Ulman who now lives in Austin, Texas, writes on his web site.

Today, the program will hold it yearly fund-raising event, the fourth Columbia's Cure Run and Ride and Health, Fitness and Nutrition Expo at 8 a.m. at Centennial Park in Howard County.

Among the key functions of the Ulman Cancer Fund is to provide a network for cancer survivors, their families and friends to exchange information. This program called Survivors/Loved Ones Network, matches survivors in am many categories as possible, such as age, issues of concern and diagnosis.

Diana Ulman, Doug's mother and chairwoman of the fund's board of directors, explains how Survivors/Loved Ones Network functions:

"We got a request over the weekend from a mother whose 17-yr old daughter had a relapse. We were able to find another mother whose daughter had the same illness and also some of the same side effects, one, a possible amputation. But her daughter had

avoided amputation by a very unusual new procedure. So they were put in touch....It is a very fragile time for people, and we try to be sensitive to people's needs and be helpful and hopeful," she said.

The fund also provides free, professionally facilitated support groups throughout the country, including Howard County. On its Web site, www.ulmanfund.org, the program offers a discussion forum that allows cancer survivors and loved ones to discuss issues, from insurance coverage to dating during treatment.

The fund sponsors Bearing Witness to Cancer, a course taught at Brown University. The course teaches pre-med students the sensitivities of working with young adults who have cancer.

Doug Ulman, director of survivorship services with the Lance Armstrong Foundation in Austin, Texas, and Brock Yetso have spoken about survivorship to the Brown students. "That's a program that we are really proud of," Yetso said. "We want to get it to as many schools as possible. As far as education, it is really cutting edge. There is more than diagnosis and cure. There is the patient behind that."

Also part of the program is a documentary film by Felix Scherzinger, a graduate student at Temple University School of Public Health, about the issues young adults cancer survivors face.

In Howard County, the Ulman Cancer Fund for Young Adults has teamed up with Hadassah in a program called Check It Out, which promotes awareness of breast and testicular cancer among high school seniors.

"I have two sons who went through school, had health education and doctor's appointments and they were never told about testicular cancer", Diana Ulman said. "It's a young man's disease and hits between the ages of 15 and 35." Early detection significantly increased chances for survival.

Soon to be published is the survival guide, *No Way! It Can't Be*, by Doug Ulman and Diana Ulman, which includes information the Ulman family wishes someone had given them when they faced Doug's diagnosis of cancer.

"There is practical information on how to keep records, how to talk to physicians and practitioners," Diana Ulman said. "There is information for patients and information about how to deal with emotions, your family members and loved ones. There is nothing comparable out there for young adults."

No Way! It Can't Be is available for free through the program's Web site, at cancer centers around the country and at the cancer information center being planned at the Howard County Central Library.