

OVATIONS

for the cure of ovarian cancer

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BY CAROL CAMBO

photographs by CHRISTOPHER CHURCHILL

ANGELS

These five New Englanders are making a

AMONG

difference, one life at a time. Their missions

US

vary, but their goals are the same: Start small,

2007

think big. Follow the need wherever it leads.



BATTLE FOR LIFE

A real estate executive marshals her resources to combat a silent but deadly disease.

**PATRICIA
FRANCHI
FLAHERTY**

*Natick, Massachusetts
Founder,
Ovations for the Cure*

EVERY WOMAN KNOWS new shoes are a powerful kind of therapy. "They're good medicine," says Patti Franchi Flaherty. Her feet sparkle in a pair of mesh jelly flats, Stuart Weitzman originals.

Thanks to Patti's foundation, Ovations for the Cure, every ovarian

“I WANT WOMEN TO BE ARMED WITH GOOD INFORMATION TO MAKE SMART CHOICES ABOUT THEIR DISEASE,” PATTI EXPLAINS.

cancer patient gets a free pair of the designer slippers through its “Happy Feet” program. Patti herself is one of those patients.

By the time Patti was diagnosed with stage 3C ovarian cancer in 1999, she had already lost her mother to the disease and two sisters to other cancers. During treatment, she realized that physicians had learned little more about ovarian cancer since her mother had died of it more than 30 years before. “I thought about how research money could alter its course, just as it has for breast cancer,” says Patti.

When cancer returned two years ago, she realized it was time to fight back with every weapon she had, so she founded Ovations in honor of her mother, Madeline, who was 43 when she died—Patti’s age when she was diagnosed.

Patti is the general manager of her family’s real estate firm, which has a long history of philanthropy in New England. She quickly tapped associates, friends, and relatives and forged partnerships to create programs—such as McDonald’s Teal at the Wheel drive-through fundraiser—to promote awareness. She organized high-profile events, including star-studded golf tournaments and fashion shows with Neiman Marcus, and recruited hundreds of members for Team Ovations for the annual Boston Marathon Jimmy Fund Walk. Last year Ovations raised more than \$800,000 for research, early detection, and awareness.

“We’re smart women looking to buy good science,” says Patti. Ovations sponsors research toward developing new treatments and preventions (including vaccines), technologies, and awareness programs.

“Ovations for the Cure is the first organization of its kind,” says Ursula Matulonis, M.D., director of gynecological oncology at Boston’s Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and a member of Ovations’ board of directors. She’s also Patti’s doctor. “Most groups support a combination of advocacy and patient education,” she notes, “but generally don’t fund research directly.” Matulonis is currently collaborating in the testing of PARP (poly-adenosine-diphosphate ribose polymerase) inhibitors against recurrent cancer, holding the promise of repairing DNA damage and of replacing chemotherapy in certain cases.

In a speech earlier this year, Patti shared the details of her disease publicly, with a large audience, for the first time. “One day I was living my life; the next, I had cancer. It’s that quiet, that fast,” she said.

“I want women to be armed with good information to make smart choices about their disease,” Patti explains. “If I can prevent someone going through what I’ve gone through, that’s success.”

LEARN MORE AT: 866-920-6382, 508-655-5412;
ovationsforthecure.org

In 2007, the National Institutes of Health recorded more than 22,000 new cases of ovarian cancer, and more than 15,000 deaths from it. It’s been called “the silent killer” because its early symptoms are subtle. For women diagnosed in stage I of the disease, the cure rate is 90 percent, but most cases aren’t diagnosed until the cancer has spread.