



Nancy Block-Zenna died Sunday in Cresskill at 37.

Her fight against breast cancer inspired charity

By **JAY LEVIN**
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For 2½ years, Nancy Block-Zenna gamely battled triple negative breast cancer, a virulent form of the disease unresponsive to most treatments.

The onetime New York City schoolteacher found support in a group of friends who established the

Triple Negative Breast Cancer Foundation. As honorary founder, Block-Zenna was front and center at the foundation's inaugural fund-raiser June 6 at the Alpine home of Malaak Compton-Rock and her husband, comedian Chris Rock.

"Nancy always had hope – she never gave up," David Zenna said of his wife, who died Sunday at their

Cresskill home. She was 37.

Through two major surgeries and other treatments, Block-Zenna remained totally focused on living life. That meant caring for daughter Jolie, now 5, and overseeing the renovation of the family's new house, David Zenna said.

"She was a very strong and determined woman," he added.

Block-Zenna, a Brooklyn native, was diagnosed with breast cancer in early 2005, while the family was living in North Bergen. At one point, David Zenna, who works in advertising sales, thought his insurance at work would not cover some of his wife's treatments. So a childhood friend of Nancy's stepped in, selling towels to

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raise money for the medical expenses.

Insurance ended up covering expenses. That's when Andrea Schackner Maline, Allison Axenrod and Hayley Dinerman – who all met Block-Zenna when their children were in the same baby music class in Englewood – suggested that the towel-sale proceeds be used to launch a foundation supporting research into triple negative breast cancer.

The foundation received its tax-exempt status this year. The "Peace, Love and a Cure" fund-raiser at the Rocks' home drew about 240 people and raised \$250,000, said Maline, a non-practicing lawyer from Norwood who is the founda-

tion's chairwoman.

The foundation plans to use some of the money to co-sponsor a triple negative breast cancer symposium just before the 30th annual San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium in December.

Barbara Waters, manager of education, outreach and advocacy for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation's North Jersey affiliate, said the term "triple negative breast cancer" was coined about two years ago to describe an aggressive form of the disease that is estrogen receptor-negative, progesterone receptor-negative and HER2 (human epidermal growth factor receptor) negative.

"The emergence of triple negative breast cancer needs a heads-

up," Waters said.

The foundation formed in Nancy Block-Zenna's honor plans another fund-raiser next year.

In addition to her husband and daughter, she is survived by her parents, Rochelle and Stanley Block, and brother Jonathan Block, all of Brooklyn.

The funeral is 9:30 a.m. today at Eden Memorial Chapels in Fort Lee. Burial will be at New Montefiore Cemetery in Farmingdale, N.Y.

The family suggested donations to the Triple Negative Breast Cancer Foundation, Box 204, Norwood, NJ 07648. Its Web site is tnbcfoundation.org.

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