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PERSON OF THE YEAR

A FIGHTING CHANCE FOR THE COMMUNITY

DUNCAN DARROW shows families how to battle cancer with hope and grace.

Duncan Darrow remembers when his mother told him she was sick.

“One day, while we were in the car, she just said, ‘I think I have cancer,’” Darrow recalled.

“I said, ‘Oh, we can beat this.’ That’s a common reaction. But you quickly discover, if it is advanced, you are not going to beat it.”

Charlotte Darrow would survive about 100 days after being diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer, dying in May 2001.

Her son, who was struck by just how many questions he had about his mother’s disease and how difficult it had been to find answers to them on the East End, would found Fighting Chance, the nonprofit Sag Harbor cancer counseling and resource center, which provides free services to everyone who walks through the door, the following year.

With Fighting Chance on the cusp of its 20th anniversary, Darrow has been honored as The Sag Harbor Ex-

press Person of the Year for 2021.

Over the years, the nonprofit’s presence has grown, from the publication of a resource directory for patients to a full-fledged counseling and advocacy organization that provides everything from transportation to and from appointments, financial aid for those unable to afford treatments, and extensive educational, wellness and counseling services.

Sister Ann Marino, the director of the Cormaria Retreat in Sag Harbor, is a former Fighting Chance board member. She described the organization as “a dream that Duncan made a reality,” pointing out that patients, families, and even medical staff members “have been helped and supported in ways that no one dreamed could have happened, except for Duncan.”

She went on to describe him as “an angel like his mom prayed for when she had cancer a little over 20 years ago.”

From its tiny office, Fight-



Duncan Darrow, the founder of Fighting Chance, is The Sag Harbor Express 'Person of the Year.'
MICHAEL HELLER

ing Chance has moved to new quarters at 34 Bay Street. And it has opened a satellite office in Stony Brook Southampton Hospital’s Phillips Family Cancer Center in Southampton Village.

“We are America’s oldest and largest free cancer counseling center,” Darrow said. With all the advances being made in cancer treatments, “I think there is a pretty good chance cancer will be a chronic disease in 20 years,” Darrow said. “In 20 years, I’ll be 92. Wouldn’t be great if cancer was no longer lethal?”

“Maybe then it would be time to turn out the lights.”