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[We Are The Lucky Ones](#)

by [Doug Ulman](#)

categories: [Cancer](#), [Health Care Reform](#)

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Doug Ulman, the President and CEO of the Lance Armstrong Foundation, is part of Change.org's [Changemakers](#) network, comprised of leading voices for social change. Change.org asked Ulman to respond to questions to provide context for his work and the causes he supports.

Change.org: What causes would you most like to promote as a Changemaker and why?

The fight against cancer. Cancer is projected to become the leading cause of death worldwide in 2010. But there is reason for hope. One-third of all cancer incidents are preventable and one-third are treatable with early detection and proper resources.

Health care reform. At LIVESTRONG we believe no American should be denied health insurance coverage because of pre-existing conditions and no American should lose his or her insurance due to changes in health or employment.

Change.org: If you could ask one million people to all do one thing to advance causes that matter to you, what would it be?

Join in the fight by taking an active role in prevention and advocacy. Practice a healthy lifestyle: don't smoke, use sunscreen, exercise, eat a well-balanced diet and get screened regularly. Reach out to your local, state and federal elected officials to let them know where you stand on issues related to cancer. Together we can make cancer a global priority.

Change.org: Tell us a bit about your personal story and how you came to care so much about these causes.

The summer after my freshman year at Brown University, I was diagnosed with cancer. I was 19 years old and a Division I collegiate athlete. Cancer was something I never expected -- and I have been fighting it ever since. By the age of 20, I had become a three-time cancer survivor. I could not find information or support programs that addressed the myriad of issues that I had to deal with, such as questions of nutrition, physical activity, relationships and dating, the emotional upheaval of facing my immortality, and a return to the classroom, among other concerns. Frustrated by the lack of resources and literature to speak to the unique needs of young adults affected by cancer, my family and I created [The Ulman Cancer Fund for Young Adults](#).

On Oct. 30, 1997, I received an e-mail from a guy I didn't know named Lance Armstrong. A fellow cancer survivor, he had read my story in the Brown alumni magazine. At the end of his e-mail, he

wrote, "We are the lucky ones. Let's try to find a way to work together and try and change the world." Little did I know, that e-mail would change my life. Lance and I kept in touch, but didn't actually meet until a couple years later. And in 2001, at Lance's request, I joined the Lance Armstrong Foundation as Director of Survivorship. I now serve as the President and CEO.

Change.org: What are the greatest obstacles to change on these causes?

Stigma. Of the 12 million people around the world who will be diagnosed with cancer in 2010, research shows many of them will hide their diagnosis, will be isolated by their communities, will be pushed out of family and social circles, and will face a lonely and painful fight for their lives. To reduce stigma associated with cancer, we need to empower survivors and re-shape public perception of those affected by cancer.

Misconception. Many think cancer is a death sentence, many more think it's contagious. These misconceptions lead to stigma, isolation and reluctance of people to seek treatment. We need to raise basic awareness of cancer prevention and conditions that lead to developing the disease.

Apathy. We know that cancer kills more people than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. Yet a disconnect remains between what we know and what we do about cancer. For so many people diagnosed with cancer, we have the technology and treatment, but it doesn't reach them. As long as we allow this to happen, anywhere on earth, it is a moral and ethical failure.

Photo credit: [joshuaBENTLEY](#)

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1.

Dear Mr. ULMAN I think my comment got lost. My name is GINGER INNESS. My brother Larry Inness has stage four melanoma, found in his lymph nodes, spreading to his liver. L arry is under the excellent care of Dr. Mario Szol, at Yale NewHaven hosp. Larry works full time, unfortunately, his health insurance isn't the best. Dr. Szol wanted Larry to start Interlukin 2 therapy months ago. Because of a 50,000.00 bill which Larry has now, due to tests, and chemo, office visits; Yale has denied this request. Laryy may be able to undergo a trial chemo. I have written senators, Mr. Obamahimself, and Yale. I find this so wrong. Are those wh ginger o have better insurance, or more money, the ones who will have a chance to live? I recently walked 350 miles for melanoma research. I was told by the American Cancer Society that little monies are given by them to melanoma research, because it is not one of the popular cancers. Millions of dollars are raised each year during the relay's for life; and melanoma reseach gets little. May God help us all if only the wealthy and the better insured , get to live. Thank you for helping to Change our world for the better.

Posted by [ginger inness](#) on 01/18/2010 @ 08:18AM PT

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Author



Doug Ulman is a three-time cancer survivor and nationally recognized cancer advocate. After overcoming chondrosarcoma and malignant melanoma twice during his sophomore year in college, Doug and his family founded the Ulman Cancer Fund for Young Adults, a non-profit organization to provide support, education, and resources to young adults, their families and friends who are affected by cancer. He served as Executive Director of the Ulman Cancer Fund for four years before joining LIVESTRONG as director of survivorship in 2001.

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