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Crushed by cancer, Newton family strikes back

By **Tenley Woodman**
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Jan. 25 will be a bittersweet day for the Zuker family of Newton.

It marks the three-year anniversary of Michael Zuker's death from lung cancer but it's also when his widow and sons will distribute funds raised in his memory to fight the disease.

Susan Zuker and sons Matthew and Jonathan, 31 and 25, will award four \$14,000 checks to The Wellness Community - Greater Boston, The Kenneth B. Schwartz Center, the New England Coalition for Cancer Survivorship and Brigham and Women's Channing Laboratory.

"You hear those three words and your world changes forever," said Susan Zuker, who was married to Michael for 31 years until his death. "He did all the right things. The day after he was diagnosed, he told us, 'Whatever happens to me I want you to know I led a blessed life.'"

Michael Zuker, 53, lost his battle with cancer four months later.

A month later, the family created the Conquer Cancer Coalition of Massachusetts and a "Conquer Cancer" license plate for the state, after seeing a similar one for New Jersey.

"They told me they had raised \$2 million for cancer research," Susan said of the New Jersey plates.

It took two years and 1,500 signatures, but Zuker and her sons got a Conquer Cancer license plate for Massachusetts. Jonathan designed the images: an eternal flame with a teardrop, a boat (referencing his father's love of fishing) and a sunrise.

Currently, 2,100 Bay State cars have the plate, which costs \$40 every two years. Through their Web site, www.conquercancer.org, and plate sales the Zuckers have raised \$70,000.

But the close-knit family is now facing the monster again: Susan's 90-year-old mother is battling lung cancer for the second time.

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Michael Zuker lost his battle with cancer, so his family has been working to help wipe it out by raising funds through their Web site and by creating the Conquer Cancer license plate. (Staff photo by Patrick Whitemore)

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