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Longtime KTVU-Channel 2 reporter **Faith Fancher**, who shared her indomitable spirit and six-year battle with breast cancer in order to educate and inspire other women, died Sunday at her home.

Fancher, 53, was surrounded by her close friends and family.

She had been fighting an aggressive form of the disease since 1997, responding to round after round of treatment with stubborn optimism and good humor.

After reporting on others for almost three decades, Fancher took the courageous step of turning the camera on herself.

Her hope was that chronicling her fight would encourage other women -- especially African Americans -- to get tested and, if necessary, get treatment. Although black women are less likely than white women to get breast cancer, statistics show they are more likely to die from it.

"I always say cancer is a terrible gift, but a gift nonetheless," Fancher told an Oakland Tribune columnist two years ago. "It teaches you and lets you know what is important."

Together with former KTVU anchor Elaine Corral and other prominent Bay Area television personalities, she formed Friends of Faith, a group that has raised more than \$500,000 for grassroots cancer organizations making grants to low-income women.

Corral and Fancher detailed her struggle in a documentary for KTVU, and in 2001, Oakland's KTOP television station produced a documentary on her participation in a clinical trial for a new combination drug therapy.

Fancher was known for her megawatt smile and her glowing personality. It was those qualities, combined with her abundance of energy, that made her a top-notch reporter, colleagues said.

"People would trust her and would tell her things that they'd tell no one else," said Tony Bonilla, KTVU's assistant news director, who worked with Fancher since her arrival at the station in 1983.

"We get a reputation as being impersonal, just showing up when something bad happens. But once she made those initial contacts people would come back to her and say, 'I remember how you treated me, so now I want to give you something,'" Bonilla said.

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A go-getter, Fancher was often the first reporter on the scene, colleagues said. She reported on such high-profile events as the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake and the 1991 East Bay Hills Firestorm.

Born in Franklin, Tenn., in August 1950, Fancher began working as a reporter in 1972, as a senior at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She was the first African-American television reporter in the city.

Fancher went on to work in Washington, D.C., at National Public Radio and CNN before moving to KTVU. She was a board member of the National Association of Black Journalists, and in 1993 was named Journalist of the Year by the Bay Area Black Media Coalition.

A family friend said Fancher's family was in seclusion Sunday, but "they would like to have everyone's prayers and thoughts to hold them up during this time."

Fancher is survived by her husband, William J. Drummond, a professor at the Graduate School of Journalism at University of California, Berkeley; her mother and stepfather, Lillian and Robert Hamilton; her father and stepmother, Sam and Georgia Baugh; and her sister, Daisy Murry, all of Franklin, Tenn.

The family requests that memorial contributions be sent to Friends of Faith, 6114 LaSalle Ave., Box 324, Oakland, 94611.

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