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Network helps demystify health matters

LLuminari brings together experts to share knowledge

By *KELLY BOTHUM*
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Elizabeth Browning understands that women are being pulled in many different directions these days. They're on the run constantly, picking up kids and groceries, juggling obligations at work and home. They're generally the overseer when it comes to family health, nutrition, exercise and overall well-being.

Naturally, they're bombarded with information from a million sources -- well-intentioned but misinformed friends, questionable Web sites and conflicting media reports.

So what's a girl to believe?

That's where LLuminari comes in. Since 2000, the Wilmington-based media company has operated a network of more than 30 high-profile doctors, clinicians and health professionals who can dispense their knowledge through a variety of sources -- via magazine articles, media interviews and education programs for busy corporate clients.

LLuminari's reach is expected to expand even further later this spring with the addition of an online social networking site that will feature some of the country's top doctors offering timely, health-related information meant to counter inaccurate and often contradictory health reports found online in blogs and discussion groups.

"We are all pressed for time. That's why our mission at LLuminari is to be the trusted voice for women and who they care for," said Browning, who co-founded the 7-year-old company with doctors Nancy L. Snyderman and Susan M. Love.

The goal is to empower people to lead healthier lives. And since there's so many opportunities for consumers to get their information -- online, television, radio, print, even via cell phones -- it's important to offer a range of outlets. At the same time, Browning said, that information doesn't mean much if it's not from a credible source.

But when consumers see someone like Oprah Winfrey taking advice from famed heart surgeon Mehmet Oz or renowned breast cancer researcher Susan Love, they know they can trust what these experts have to say.

"From the beginning, our goal was to bring more people access to top doctors who are great communicators. We wanted to bring them together as a team and demystify matters of health," said Browning.

LLuminari experts have a depth of knowledge that gives weight to their comments, said Alice Domar, a psychologist and assistant professor at Harvard Medical School, who also is a speaker for the organization.

"I've never been at a LLuminari talk where the expert isn't totally up to date," said Domar, who spoke last month in Dover at a Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition event. "I was so sick and tired of hearing from people who were supposedly experts who would get up and talk about their own theories, with no research or data."

It also helps that they come across as experts who truly understand the challenges that women and

families face, such as balancing healthy meals with limited time to prepare them.

As a working mother and wife, Domar, the author of a recently published book, "How to Be Happy Without Being Perfect," understands the quest women have to fit everything into their lives -- exercise, healthy eating, personal time -- and the difficulties they have actually achieving it all.

"Women tend to be more interested in health, more proactive, the one taking the kids in when they're sick," said Domar, executive director of the Domar Center for Mind/Body Health in Boston. "They want to know what can they do to be as healthy as they can. We want to give them a realistic look at information."

Browning said the experts who partner with LLuminari, whose corporate clients include General Mills, Johnson & Johnson and Pepsico, see their role as empowering people to make the best decisions they can about their health. To do that, consumers must have access to accurate, up-to-date information that is easily understandable and accessible, which means LLuminari will be constantly evolving to meet those demands, she said.

Even the experts themselves are awed by the level of expertise found at LLuminari. "How privileged do I feel to be a part of this group?" Domar said. "It's a powerhouse, I've got to tell you."

HOW LLUMINARI WAS FORMED

Elizabeth Browning's introduction to Dr. Nancy Snyderman and Dr. Susan B. Love came in 2000 when the three of them spoke on a panel at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. At the time, Browning was president of DuPont Consumer Health, a division of the company's nutrition and health offerings.

The three professionals clicked, so much so that they formed a health-education company, LLuminari Inc., geared to women and family health.

Today, LLuminari, which has offices in Wilmington and New York City, is home to more than 30 health and wellness experts, including doctors, psychologists and clinicians considered among the best in the United States.

LLuminari's stable of experts provide written content for Web sites, magazines and company newsletters. The multimedia company also publishes books and DVDs, conducts employee health programming and consulting. It operates three Web sites: www.lluminari.com, www.embracingwomenshealth.com, and www.strongwomen.com.
