

BRIGHTLIGHTS



JMU Alumni Association Board member Scott Rogers ('00, '02M) is co-founder of TakeThemA Meal.com, which helps families coordinate meal deliveries to those in need.

[Scott Rogers ('00, '02M)]

Feel-good food helps families in need

By JAMIE MARSH

Morgan Stone Langley delivered her second child in January, with a 2-year-old waiting at home. Naturally, her best friend Heather's first thought was, "What can I cook?"

Rather than whipping up a favorite casserole and dropping it off, Heather opted to throw technology into the mix by using TakeThemAMEal.com, a website created by Scott Rogers ('00, '02M) and Adina Bailey ('99M). In just a few minutes, she customized a sophisticated meal coordination spreadsheet that all of Langley's family and friends could access online.

Langley was so impressed by TakeThemAMEal.com that she wrote about the website on her blog, telling followers it was "an incredible gift." She recommends the site

for families with members who have had surgery, those with a death in the family or the elderly.

Testimonials like Langley's are the best kind of advertising for the website.

'We're helping people in times of grief and joy. We've made something that was once a burden into something easily organized, so people can focus on making meals and helping loved ones.'

— SCOTT ROGERS ('00, '02M)

More than 25,000 people visit TakeThemAMEal.com each week, and almost all of them find out about the free service via blogs, Facebook and other social media. "One friend telling another is how we've grown," says Rogers. "Word of mouth has been the best advertising."

Since the site's 2007 launch more than 250,000 meals have been coordinated, and people living in every state have used the site. Part of the appeal is the site's simplicity: Participants log on using the recipient's name and a password. Then, they sign up for a specific day and list what they're bringing. Meal duplication is no problem, and food allergy information and driving directions are at volunteers' fingertips.

Rogers never anticipated the site would be so helpful to so many people. "TakeThemAMEal.com was created in response to one particular family's need," he says. When a Harrisonburg-area mother of four was faced with a six-month medical issue, her large network of family and friends were eager to help. Adina Bailey ('99M), the mother's close friend, was quickly over-

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whelmed by hundreds of people needing to know what the kids liked to eat and what day food was needed. “I asked Scott if we could put the needs online,” recalls Bailey. “I wanted more of my time to be spent with her kids and at the hospital, not on the phone.” Rogers responded with the first version of TakeThemAMeal.com.

Rogers is no stranger to the volunteer spirit. The media arts and design major served as president of the JMU Student Ambassadors and as a student member of the alumni board. He is active in the Harrisonburg Alumni Chapter and currently serves on the JMU Alumni Association Board of Directors.

The momentum of TakeThemAMeal.com has continued to grow since its initial use in Harrisonburg. “Several people from our first group of users wanted to keep using the site,” Rogers says. A church secretary organized a regular meals ministry, and small groups coordinated snack sign-ups. An 80-year-old fan posted, “Great delight in helping take care of lifelong friends.”

“It must have saved hours in phone calls for my friend,” Leah in Florida wrote on her blog after having surgery. “And they didn’t just bring some spaghetti and bread. We’re talking meat, bread, salad, drinks, dessert ... the works.” TakeThemAMeal.com has been very useful for Jacqueline Dost of Atlanta, who used the free service after her husband’s cancer diagnosis. She posted on Facebook saying, “It’s a great way to coordinate meals from our friends with a little input from us.”

With the help of user feedback and testimonials, Rogers and Bailey continue to tweak the site for usability. Both founders say they will do whatever it takes to never charge for the service. “We’re helping people in times of grief and joy,” Rogers says. “We’ve made something that was once a burden into something easily organized, so people can focus on making meals and helping loved ones.” ❧



Scott Rogers ('00, '02M) and Adina Bailey ('99M) work on enhancements to their TakeThemAMeal.com website.

[Carrie Owen Plietz ('97)]

Perfecting patient care

BY SARA RIDDLE ('10)

Since graduating, Carrie Owen Plietz ('97) has been bettering the lives of patients. From developing skilled nursing facilities to supervising the development of a full electronic health record system, Plietz has helped raise patient satisfaction for thousands.

Plietz’s hard work and care for others was honored this year as the American College of Healthcare Executives named her the 2010 Young Healthcare Executive of the Year and presented her with the Robert S. Hudgens Memorial Award. The annual award is presented to an exceptional healthcare executive who is under 40 years old and who is the chief executive officer of a health services organization.

“It’s amazing and very humbling,” says Plietz, who received the award at the annual ACHE conference in Chicago. “Our profession is blessed with many talented individuals. To be acknowledged in such a way by my national organization, one that I respect tremendously, is just thrilling.”

As chief operating officer of the Mills-Peninsula Health Services/Sutter Health System in Burlingame, Calif., Plietz has been responsible for several major initiatives, including implementation of Sutter Health’s first acute care electronic health record system. She was the driving force behind a major “patient affordability” initiative that helped lower costs and improve patient satisfaction. Plietz brought in a team of caregivers to listen to the “voice of patients” through satisfaction survey results, letters and family comments.

Prior to her current position, Plietz served as chief administrative officer and vice president of operations for specialty services at Sutter Health’s California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco. There, she developed new centers for cancer, cardiac and endoscopy treatment, achieved a 96th percentile patient satisfaction score, and developed a regional referral network for transplant services, including a Vietnam collaborative for liver transplantation.

Plietz credits much of her success to JMU’s health science faculty. “My professors taught real-life scenarios, which is extremely important in healthcare’s ever changing environment. JMU was

where I first learned about and joined the student chapter of the American College of Healthcare Executives.”

Plietz serves as president of the ACHE chapter for the California Association of Healthcare Leaders and serves on the ACHE Early Careerist Committee, and the Northern and Central California Regents Advisory Council. “I’m a volunteer board member for the Women’s Community Clinic, which provides free primary and reproductive care to uninsured or underinsured women,” she says.

As one of the most promising young healthcare executives in the country, Plietz dedicates herself to “guiding aspiring executives, improving the care of patients and providing healthcare services to those who need it most.”

Plietz is married to Jasen Plietz ('97), who graduated with a business degree with a concentration in computer science. He works on software development in the Bay Area, having worked in Silicon Valley on major projects such as the entire infrastructure for the California Paid Family Leave Act. The two welcomed their first child in April. ❧

Health sciences major Carrie Owen Plietz ('97) is the American College of Healthcare Executives 2010 Robert S. Hudgens Memorial Young Healthcare Executive of the Year.

