

{Be the Change}

Purple Pride among the yellow of LIVESTRONG

Four alums help cancer survivors and patients BY GABRIELLE PICCININNI ('11)

Way down in Austin, Texas, a small pocket of purple and gold thrives among the bright yellow brand of LIVESTRONG, the organization created by world-champion cyclist Lance Armstrong. Colleen Wilson Legge ('97), Melissa Sileo ('98), Ashley Moxley Koenings ('02) and intern Ayshe Tayfun ('06) are among the 82 employees of LIVESTRONG.

Legge, a music major with an emphasis on musical theater, traveled back to Harrisonburg to visit campus last October. She was excited by the changes on campus, namely the construction at UREC and the new Forbes Center for the Performing Arts. "There is a deep sense of community at JMU. I can come back to visit, walk around campus, and it still feels like home," she says.

Before joining LIVESTRONG, Legge worked for Disney for nine years, and after singing her heart out, traveling the world and living in Paris as part of her job with Disney, she made a major career shift to the nonprofit sector. It all began in 2003 when Legge ran a marathon in honor of her brother, Thomas — a cancer survivor. Legge also volunteered and later worked for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. Now she manages all aspects of the endurance fundraising program for LIVESTRONG's development department.

Legge says her Madison Experience helps her daily. "The musical theater program taught me the demands and rewards of dedication, the art of multitasking and how to triumph through long working hours."

Melissa Sileo ('98), LIVESTRONG's senior manager of navigation services, works alongside Legge and says her undergraduate studies in social work helped tremendously in her career. "The friendships I built at JMU, my school work and my internship at the U.Va. medical center truly shaped my career path." After

graduating from JMU, Sileo completed a year with AmeriCorps before earning a master's in social work at Boston University.

Helping spread the Purple Pride throughout the office is navigation coordinator Ashley Koenings ('02). She graduated with a B.S. in psychology, and nine years later continues to rank her first few visits to the JMU campus among her favorite Madison memories. "Our freshman guide shared JMU history, joked with us and seemed to be friends with everyone who passed by.

JMU felt small, comfortable and positive. I left with a great feeling!" she recalls. "The intellectual challenges posed inside the classroom as well as the extra-curricular adventures fostered my personal growth. I met some amazing people and for that I will always be grateful."

The youngest Duke at LIVESTRONG is 2006 alumna Ayshe Tayfun. After graduating with a B.A. in history, Tayfun worked at the American Society of Clinical Oncology for three years. She currently divides her time between completing an M.Ed. in health education at the University of Texas at Austin and interning at LIVESTRONG, where she

helped plan the 2010 Young Adult Alliance Conference.

The mission of LIVESTRONG is short and to the point: to inspire and empower people affected by cancer. What started in 1997 as the Lance Armstrong Foundation with a fundraising cycling race has flourished into the global organization known as LIVESTRONG. Now synonymous with the color yellow, LIVESTRONG has raised more than \$350 million for cancer research.

Everyday, Legge, Sileo, Koenings and Tayfun work to offer new and efficient ways to encourage and guide individuals and families affected by cancer and to spread the word about the work of LIVESTRONG. m

* Learn more at www.livestrong.org/.



Bringing the Purple Pride to the yellow bands at LIVESTRONG are Melissa Sileo ('98), Ashley Moxley Koenings ('02) and Colleen Wilson Legge ('97).

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