

IN EVERY ISSUE

Message from the LAF's President and CEO

BY MITCH STOLLER

Facing cancer's challenges on your own terms.

On behalf of the Lance Armstrong Foundation, I am thrilled about the opportunity to partner with *CURE* to develop this special survivors issue. The issue captures the spirit of the Foundation's mission to inspire and empower cancer survivors, and I hope *CURE* readers find the content interesting and useful.

At our recent LIVESTRONG Day in Washington, D.C., one of our advocates mentioned that he had lost a number of family members to cancer. He wondered aloud whether he himself was a survivor, as he had not personally been diagnosed. I shared with him that the LAF's definition includes not only the person diagnosed, but also caregivers, family and friends.

We believe surviving cancer starts at the moment of diagnosis because we feel attitude is everything. That is how our namesake and founder confronted his own experience with cancer, and it has since become part of our motto: Unity is Strength. Knowledge is Power. Attitude is Everything.

Other organizations define survivorship differently. But ultimately, that self-definition is a personal decision for each person affected by cancer. Regardless, the advocate's question reminded me of the pervasiveness of cancer. Affecting not just the patient, cancer truly is a family disease. And the LAF is here from the moment of diagnosis to provide support, information and tools to help cancer survivors—under our extended definition—live life on their own terms.

Living life on one's own terms means making educated decisions about what courses of treatment to take, and it's seeking a second or third opinion when necessary. It means, if it comes to it, being in control of how your life ends. And maintaining a high quality of life is critical at every stage of the cancer experience.

That's where we come in. The LAF's resources and services address the non-medical needs that accompany a cancer diagnosis—the physical, emotional and practical challenges that people with cancer face every day. Through my work

at the LAF, I am fortunate to be acquainted with cancer survivors who are living examples of the skills and attitude we need to fight cancer and be victorious: discipline, determination, courage and a positive attitude. I don't mean the kind of victory that comes from winning a race. I mean the victory of the human spirit in the face of great adversity, the symbolic victory of human determination in overcoming great odds, of completing a momentous task when all around, the odds are stacked against you.

When people talk to me about Lance, they usually do not mention that he has won the Tour de France a record seven times. If they do, they certainly do not recall the winning time, or who he beat or by how many seconds. What they remember is that Lance beat cancer to compete in the Tour de France. And they know that is the real triumph.

Lance turned bad news into good and turned words into action, recognizing that in the battle with cancer, unity is strength, knowledge is power and attitude is everything. We invite you to share this spirit and to join the LAF through the LIVESTRONG Challenge series, our advocacy program or the LIVESTRONG Summit this October.

We are proud to offer opportunities for people affected by cancer to effect change around the needs of cancer survivors by taking action themselves, and we encourage *CURE* readers to join in our efforts. LIVESTRONG.