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Live strong, give back and hold officials accountable

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Lance Armstrong is a cycling champion, cancer survivor and founder of Livestrong, a Texas non-profit organization that supports families fighting cancer. He can be contacted through his website, livestrong.org.

On Oct. 2, 1996, I was diagnosed with [cancer](#). That day I became part of a community that, at 25, I didn't really care to be in. But entering that network was the best thing that could have happened to me. It helped me survive and it gave me a mission.

After I went into remission I had two objectives: reclaim my life by getting back on the bike, and repay the debt I owed the network of caregivers, loved ones and survivors who helped me get through the toughest fight of my life. So in 1997, I started the [Lance Armstrong](#) Foundation, now known as Livestrong, to give anyone affected by cancer the information, services and the community they need to weather the triumphs and the trenches.

Today my team and I are marking the 14th anniversary of my entrance into this community with Livestrong Day, a global grassroots day of action against cancer. We'll honor lost loved ones and cancer survivors with more than 1,000 events worldwide, including several here in the Dallas area. And we'll take time to look at an often-ignored issue as another election approaches.

As Texans weather tough economic times, Livestrong and the [American Cancer Society](#) teamed up to put a price tag on lost productivity and income due to cancer. We found that in 2008 cancer racked up nearly a trillion dollars in lost economic output. Cancer, it turns out, is the leading cause of economic loss due to premature death and disability. As election campaigns kick into high gear, let's ask our candidates how they plan to plug that massive leak.

Cancer is largely preventable. If we call for a renewed commitment by elected officials to attack this disease and support survivors, we will not only save millions of lives, but also billions of dollars in lost economic output. We must hold elected officials accountable if they fail to act. What are their plans to combat the world's leading causes of death? What are they doing to support Texas families facing the fight of their lives?

Lee Nagel, a resident of my native [Plano](#), is a veteran of this fight and a personal hero of mine. Lee is a cancer survivor, grassroots organizer, caregiver, and fundraiser. She knows cancer well: her father had Multiple Myeloma and her mother, [breast cancer](#). Lee was diagnosed at 36. Her parents are gone, but Lee went into remission five years ago.

Every day since has been about giving back.

Not content with the thousands of dollars she and her husband raised during Livestrong Challenges, or with the hundreds of hours they volunteered at the [Richardson](#) Regional Cancer Center, Lee and Steve came up with an idea for an annual golf tournament during a brainstorming session in my mother

Linda's back yard. "Swing Fore! Yellow" debuted last year at the Gleneagles Country Club in Plano and has raised more than \$560,000 in cities all over America.

On Livestrong Day, let's call for that same level of ingenuity, dedication and selflessness from the people we elect to represent us.

Through the generous work of people like Lee and Steve Nagel, we've raised more than \$350 million since 1997. But we can't win against this opponent without our local, state and federal governments on our side.

Cancer may leave a body, but it never leaves a life. I won't consider my debt repaid until everyone diagnosed with cancer can face this disease on their own terms. This November, please elect leaders who are devoted to helping patients and survivors live with cancer, and eventually leave it behind.

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