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## **Living Strong**

### **Couple puts own spin on wedding**

**By Tori Brock**  
**Staff Reporter**

HUNTSVILLE — When cancer affects your life by taking the life of someone you love, it can be easy to react with bitterness and depression.

One Huntsville couple, however, is putting a positive spin on a devastating situation. The weekend of Oct. 23 is the LIVESTRONG Challenge weekend in Austin and it's also the weekend Jennifer Jeansonne and Brad Didier have chosen to pledge their lives to one another.

"We both have immediate family members who have passed away from cancer," Didier said. "My mom and my oldest sister and her uncle and cousin.

"It's something that is personal and close to us," he added. "I went to the LIVESTRONG challenge for the first time last year."

While Jennifer has completed the challenge more times than she can remember, Brad's first time was such a moving experience he said he knew it was a life changing event.

"I ran, biked and we both did fundraising all year at various events throughout the year," he explained. "We took a few vacations last year, a ski, a cruise, we went to Chicago during the summer and we did the LIVESTRONG Challenge in Austin.

"When it came down to picking a weekend for our wedding, I said out of all the places we went this year if we had to pick one event, I would pick this one hands down," he said. "It was that powerful and that moving."

The couple wanted to pick a weekend for their wedding which would celebrate not only their new life together but also honor the lives of those they've lost to cancer.

"What better weekend to have our wedding?" Didier asked. "This is the beginning of our new life and a symbol of our commitment to this cause.

"We have the opportunity to spread the message that much more to our family and friends and we didn't want to pass up this opportunity," he added. "My uncle calls us Lance Armstrong disciples – and we are. We believe in our cause and the mission."

Jeansonne and Didier are new to Huntsville, having moved here over the summer from Louisiana. Jeansonne is a kinesiology professor at Sam Houston State University and Didier teaches K through 12 physical education. Jeansonne said jokingly she figured they should practice what they preach. Because of several events happening Saturday, Oct. 23, the couple moved their wedding to Friday night.

“We’re having an outdoor wedding in the Hill Country of Austin,” Jeansonne said. “On Saturday morning, we’ll get up and run and Saturday night we have an appreciation dinner as part of the LIVESTRONG weekend.

“They bring in people from all over the world who are doing amazing things. It’s very inspirational and we didn’t want to miss the dinner so we moved the wedding to Friday night,” she explained. “Because we both teach, we’ll take a honeymoon cruise in January during break. For now, I’ll be back teaching on Monday.”

In addition to all the couple will be doing as part of the LIVESTRONG Challenge events, they’ve also requested their family and friends participate.

“Between volunteering, walking, running and biking, most of our friends and family are participating,” Didier said. “Crossing the finish line last year was one of the most incredible feelings I’ve had in my whole life. I dedicated and rode for my family members. That was my longest bike ride and the most challenging.

“To finish it, I was completely wiped out physically and emotionally. There was no question about when to have our wedding,” he added. “It’s so personal about why we go there and why we fund raise and what it’s all about. There’s no doubt in our minds this is part of our calling. I think it’s why we’ve been given some pretty decent health ourselves.”

Several factors in the wedding ceremony itself will tie in to the cause of fighting cancer. The couple has chosen the LIVESTRONG colors of bright yellow, black and white for the wedding and Didier will be wearing the same style tuxedo he wore to his sister’s wedding.

“My oldest sister died of brain cancer. I gave her away during her wedding,” he explained. “I’m wearing the same style tux to honor her memory and celebrate her.”

As for why the couple chose LIVESTRONG over other cancer organizations, Jeansonne said attitude is everything.

“They refer to a survivor as the day you’re told you have cancer,” she said. “It’s very optimistic. It’s from that day forward you take hold and take charge.

“They’re so big on empowering people,” she added. “They offer one-on-one support.”

The LIVESTRONG Challenge in Austin will be held Oct. 23 and 24 in downtown Austin and nearby Dripping Springs. For more information, visit [www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org).



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