

René's LIVESTRONG Story

Vallejo, CA



I am a cancer survivor.
My story is about Attitude.

To me, live strong means accepting God's plan and doing what it takes to keep your part of the bargain.

I've worn the yellow wristband because it's a reminder of the goal. I wear two wristbands—both sizes. I want to live strong today, but also be reminded to strive to live stronger, the next day and the day after and after that.

My life's journey has taken me from being an accountant, to a comedian, to a lung cancer patient. I believe that it is no mere earthly coincidence that my talent to make people laugh, and my bout with lung cancer, created a life-altering intersection that compelled me to reach out to cancer patients, showing them the benefits of using laughter as a healing and coping tool. I had to suddenly cope with being a woman in my prime, an energetic, health conscious, athlete—a distance runner—no less, who had never smoked, being diagnosed with lung cancer. I had to laugh, because I found people had an easier time accepting that I had lung cancer, without ever smoking, than

that I had been an accountant, with a sense of humor. Laughing helped heal me and more importantly kept a very active person sane through the process. However, that's not the most important part of the story I wish to share. My little 14 year-old doggie, Peanut, died three days ago from a long bout with cancer. She was 4 pounds of cuteness, comfort and comedy, especially comedy. Her antics made me laugh so hard. Her material was spontaneous and her timing impeccable. She traveled with me for most of her 14 years, as I toured the country becoming an award-winning comedian. I couldn't have endured the transience and loneliness that is inherent in life on the road, without her. More importantly, I could not have survived my bout with lung cancer that resulted in a partial lung removal. Dealing with cancer is quite a different story when it's a member of your family (two or four-legged). However, it was not until she was diagnosed with bladder cancer, almost four years to the date after I had been diagnosed, that I understood the meaning of, "It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog." For almost two years, she battled the might of cancer and came off the mat at death's door so many times that the people at her vet's office, called her, "the dog with nine lives", "the miracle dog". Even in the last six months when her bladder was full of tumors; when only one kidney functioned; when she was also diagnosed with an enlarged heart; when she developed a tumor on her lung—she never lost one ounce of her cuteness, comfort or comedy. She even added pounds of courage, as she physically deteriorated. I think it always helped her physical and mental condition that I had put a "LIVESTRONG" bracelet around her neck—a perfect fit. She certainly lived strong and helped me to live strong, as well. I think Lance would have been proud. I also think if Peanut had been a cyclist competing with Lance in the "Tour de France", Lance would have finished second-seven times.