

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, please [click here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytreprints.com for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#) »



July 29, 2004

The Race Is On for Bracelets Benefiting Armstrong Charity

By ELAINE ARADILLAS

When Lance Armstrong was crossing the finish line for his sixth victory at the Tour de France on Sunday, Sean Duffy and his friend Mark Backman were cycling through city traffic down Broadway.

They stopped off at NikeTown in search of yellow wristbands, similar to the one Mr. Armstrong wore throughout the Tour, but none were in stock. Then they rode to Macy's Sport store, where some were still available.

"We were biking and pretending to be Lance for a day," said Mr. Duffy, a 20-year-old student at Columbia University. "Every time I look at the bracelet, I think of people struggling in the fight against cancer."

In late May, Nike and the Lance Armstrong Foundation joined forces and created the bracelet campaign with five million bright yellow wristbands bearing the word "LIVE-STRONG."

Sales benefit the foundation, which Mr. Armstrong set up in 1997 when he was being treated for testicular cancer, which had spread to his lungs and his brain. Two years later, at age 27 and as a cancer survivor, he won his first Tour de France. The foundation aims to help people with cancer live powerfully through education, research, advocacy and support after treatment.

The initial demand for the wristbands was strong, causing Nike to make more for the Tour de France. They sold out in Paris and have been selling out as soon as they have arrived in sporting goods stores across the United States, said Trisha Burns, a spokeswoman for Nike. The Web site www.wearyellow.com, which sells the bands in bulk, shows them back-ordered and sold out. The total number sold is unknown. But Michelle Milford, a spokeswoman for the foundation, based in Austin, Texas, said it was nearing eight million.

The bands cost \$1 each, with all proceeds going to the foundation. Nike has agreed to donate an additional \$1 million. Ms. Milford said the continued interest in the band has been thrilling to watch.

"In addition to celebrities, we've been seeing a lot of Olympians wearing them," she said during a

telephone interview from Austin. "People who have been wearing them through the Tour de France haven't taken them off."

Like the coveted yellow jersey that takes a feat to obtain, the yellow band can seem just as difficult.

Steve Hamilton, 38, was walking through NikeTown on 57th Street when he saw a box of wristbands near the cashier.

"I saw that last box on the counter and sort of lunged at them," he said.

He bought one for his 10-year-old daughter, Bailey, who, moments later, had already pulled it out of the cellophane wrapper and slipped it over her wrist.

Mr. Hamilton said it was a popular cause because everyone seems to know someone who was affected by cancer. He said that his father died of lung cancer in 1986 and that his mother-in-law was recovering from ovarian cancer.

The yellow bracelet has quickly become a symbol for cancer.

"I think the bracelet is a nice change from the ribbon," he said. "There's so many ribbons, you don't know what they stand for anymore."

The bracelet has quickly become as popular as the red and pink ribbons that have become synonymous with awareness of AIDS and breast cancer, respectively. But according to the foundation's Web site, yellow means more than the color of a jersey or a disease; it stands for hope, courage, inspiration and perseverance.

For Steve Strompf, the wristband is a symbol of support.

About six months ago, his father-in-law was found to have lung cancer. Mr. Strompf said he read Mr. Armstrong's books in a couple of days and turned to his Web site to learn more about cancer.

He recently learned about the wristband and decided to check NikeTown to see whether it had any. He grabbed four of them as other customers clamored to get one. He plans on giving one each to his wife, his two children and his father-in-law.

Mr. Strompf said he was amazed by the athletic feat that Mr. Armstrong had accomplished six times in as many years, but he said it was Mr. Armstrong's dedication to cancer patients that was most inspiring.

"I'm not buying these because he won the Tour," he said. "I think the guy is an awesome person."

Photo: Lance Armstrong Foundation bracelets sold out quickly at NikeTown on East 57th Street yesterday, and were hard to find at other retailers. (Photo by Sara Krulwich/The New York Times)

| [Back to Top](#)