



Livestrong shows solidarity of 50M ; Yellow bracelets go from fad to brand name

[FINAL Edition]

USA TODAY - McLean, Va.

Subjects: Brands; Collectibles; Jewelry; Social conditions & trends

Author: Ruibal, Sal

Date: May 13, 2005

Start Page: A.1

Section: NEWS

Document Text

How ubiquitous are those bright yellow Livestrong bracelets? When the campaign for cancer survivors hits the one-year mark Tuesday, Nike officials predict 50 million of the \$1 bracelets will have been sold. That's one for every six Americans or the entire populations of New York, Florida and Illinois.

When Nike and the Lance Armstrong Foundation planned the Livestrong campaign, their revenue projection was \$6million: a \$1million donation from the sports brand and an additional \$5million in guaranteed bracelet sales. The foundation was created in 1996 by the cyclist after he survived testicular cancer.

"When I heard that Nike was making 5 million of them, I was a little skeptical," Armstrong says. "I figured we'd be shooting them at each other for years."

In its first eight years, the foundation raised \$11.5million. In the year since Livestrong was launched, bracelet sales and other fundraisers have brought in \$50million. The foundation keeps about 77 cents from each \$1 bracelet after production costs; 81% of that is dedicated to educational and grant programs for cancer survivors and research, according to President and CEO Mitchell Stoller.

"This has been wonderful but also unexpected," Stoller says.

The bright, yellow plastic bands have their origin in "baller bands," rubber bands that street basketball players wear on their wrists, snapping them to get psyched up for games. Nike considered making baller bands with different messages on them as promotional items, but the concept quickly found its way to the Livestrong project, business director Scott MacEachern says.

Armstrong's team -- and rock star girlfriend Sheryl Crow -- wore the bracelets during the 2004 Tour de France, and soon other Nike athletes, film stars, musicians and even presidential candidate John Kerry picked up on the fad, followed by millions of kids.

Nike is now introducing a line of Livestrong "10/2" clothing and shoes. The numbers refer to the date in 1996 when Armstrong was diagnosed with cancer. But does Lance's brand still have legs?

"Absolutely," says Al Kahn, CEO of 4Kids Entertainment and the man who made Pokemon and Cabbage Patch Kids into billion-dollar global fads. "Livestrong is fun, affordable, easily identified but hard to find and makes a positive statement about the wearer."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

Abstract (Document Summary)

When Nike and the Lance Armstrong Foundation planned the Livestrong campaign, their revenue projection was \$6million: a \$1million donation from the sports brand and an additional \$5million in guaranteed bracelet sales. The foundation was created in 1996 by the cyclist after he survived testicular cancer.

The bright, yellow plastic bands have their origin in "baller bands," rubber bands that street basketball players wear on their wrists, snapping them to get psyched up for games. Nike considered making baller bands with different messages on them as promotional items, but the concept quickly found its way to the Livestrong project, business director Scott MacEachern says.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

