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CHANDINI PORTTEUS

THE NEW CEO OF THE
LIVESTRONG FOUNDATION

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ON THE COVER

**LIVING EVERY MINUTE
WITH EVERY OUNCE
OF HER BEING**

BY DEBORAH HAMILTON-LYNNE

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FEATURE

FIGHT SONG

BY RACHEL MERRIMAN



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Photo courtesy of Austin Gourmet Popcorn.

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ON THE COVER

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Rae Cosmetics, raecosmetics.com

Hair by **Leticia Villegas**
Rae Cosmetics, raecosmetics.com



Blank NYC white faux-leather jacket, \$126; Wayf lace peplum blouse, \$74, available at Nordstrom, 2901 S. Capital of Texas Hwy, 512.691.3500, nordstrom.com; Jen7 black leggings, \$185, available at Neiman Marcus, 3400 Palm Way, 512.719.1200, neimanmarcus.com; tinsel drop earrings, \$38, available at baublebar.com.



YOU MUST NOT LET CANCER TAKE CONTROL OF IT. WE BELIEVE
ING STRONG. UNITY IS STRENGTH. KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.
SED. WE HELP YOU ACCEPT THE TEARS. ACKNOWLEDGE THE
D PTY. AND IN STRAIGHT, OPEN TALK ABOUT CANCER. WITH
ARE TEAM. AND IN THE PEOPLE YOU LIVE WITH, WORK WITH,
FE. WE'RE ABOUT THE HARD STUFF. LIKE FINDING THE NERVE
S. WE'RE ABOUT PREVENTING CANCER. FINDING IT EARLY.
CONTROL OF HOW YOUR LIFE ENDS. IT'S YOUR LIFE.
IVING. BANKING YOUR SPERM. PRESERVING YOUR FERTILITY.
OMPANIES AND EMPLOYERS. IT'S KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS.
E BEFORE POLICY MAKERS. YOUR CHAMPION WITHIN THE
NEVER ENDS. CANCER MAY LEAVE YOUR BODY, BUT IT NEVER
ONE OF THE TOUGHEST CANCER SURVIVORS ON THE PLANET.

BY DEBORAH HAMILTON-LYNNE
PHOTOS BY ANDREW CHAN

STYLED BY ASHLEY HARGROVE, DTK AUSTIN STYLING
MAKEUP BY ANASTASIA MILLER, RAE COSMETICS
HAIR BY LETICIA VILLEGAS, RAE COSMETICS

54

LIVING EVERY MINUTE WITH EVERY OUNCE OF HER BEING

Chandini Portteus takes the helm
at the Livestrong Foundation.

WE BELIEVE IN LIFE. YOUR LIFE.
 WE BELIEVE IN LIVING EVERY MINUTE OF IT WITH EVERY OUNCE OF YOUR BEING.
 AND THAT YOU MUST NOT LET CANCER TAKE CONTROL OF IT.
 WE BELIEVE IN ENERGY: CHanneled AND FIERCE.
 WE BELIEVE IN FOCUS: GETTING SMART AND LIVING STRONG.
 UNITY IS STRENGTH. KNOWLEDGE IS POWER. ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING.
THIS IS LIVESTRONG.

Thus begins the Livestrong manifesto, reflecting the message and the mission that would ultimately draw Chandini Portteus to Austin. Born in India, Portteus' mother and father came to the United States shortly after the birth of their eldest daughter, hoping she would receive an education that would allow her to pursue everything they hoped and dreamed for her. Their plan worked, so well, in fact, that it seems part of the natural progression that a child whose name means "moonlight" would grow to be the woman that would breathe life into an iconic organization in decline. Soma, equated with the goddess Chandra, is the Vedic god of the moon who brings strength and immortality to the gods as they drink his powerful liquid. Although they may not have known the mythology behind the name, the board of the Livestrong Foundation hired Portteus betting she could do the same: bring the elixir of immortality to the challenged brand.

Founded in 1997 by Austinite and cyclist Lance Armstrong, Livestrong became an iconic brand, with more than 87 million people in the world wearing the distinctive yellow wristband since its inception in 2004. However, as scandal swirled around Armstrong, the organization suffered by association. Once a corporate darling, Livestrong lost favor with many of its corporate partners, including Nike, its main backer, which cut ties in 2013. Although Livestrong's revenue dropped 40 percent in 2013, from \$38 million to \$23 million, and again in 2014 to \$20 million, the organization survived, thanks to strong financials, with an endowment of \$50 million and assets of more than \$100 million, and a final break with Armstrong in 2013.

Finding themselves at a crossroads and in need of renewal and reinvention, those on the board unanimously voted to hire the youngest senior executive in the history of the organization.

Portteus, at age 36, was no stranger to controversy and branding challenges, having spent 10 years at Susan G. Komen, serving as the chief mission officer during that highly publicized rift when the organization pulled funding from Planned Parenthood. Surviving the storm, Portteus was recognized and received accolades for her role in the strategic redesign and creation of new branding efforts for Komen, as well as for her global outreach, fundraising and personal touch with major donors and corporations. She was also the architect and manager of the Komen Scientific Advisory Board and the Komen Scholars program, exactly the experience needed to put Livestrong on the road to recovery.

Coming on board as president and CEO of the Livestrong Foundation in April, Portteus finalized a \$50 million partnership with the University of Texas Dell Medical School for the creation of the Livestrong Cancer Institutes, formed a new team and is working on a strategic plan that is fresh, courageous and innovative, much like the woman herself.

In October, Portteus was on a panel titled The Courage to Innovate at the Texas Conference for Women. As she spoke about the challenge of being a "wartime CEO" as an opportunity, it became apparent why she was the right choice for Livestrong and why she is also a natural fit for the energy that emanates from Austin.

Looking for big things to come in 2016, Portteus told *Austin Woman* in her own words about her journey from Garland, Texas, where she was voted most friendly in her senior year of high school, to the doorstep of Livestrong, where the board's unanimous vote was a ringing endorsement of her ability to start anew with a fresh and courageous vision for the organization.



Previous page: Topshop black-and-white sweater, \$80; T by Alexander Wang white skirt, \$195, available at Nordstrom, 2901 S. Capital of Texas Hwy., 512.691.3500, nordstrom.com.

This page: Joie Odelette printed blouse, \$253; Vince ivory vest, \$495, available at Neiman Marcus, 3400 Palm Vwy, 512.719.1200, neimanmarcus.com.

I grew up wanting to serve people and to change the world. Yes, I was voted most friendly, and I think it is the way I am, to this day. I am inclusive. I like to make people comfortable, whether it is in my home or here at Livestrong. I want them to feel welcome. I learned this from my parents. Growing up in Garland, I lived in a world where you didn't see very many people of color or Indian descent. I went to a primarily Caucasian school and I knew what it meant to be different, but for me, that was OK. I thought it was up to me to educate my friends about what it meant to be Indian. This helped me, and I now realize that when I am working in health, I have compassion for all people and especially for those who are challenged by racial disparities that exist in types of cancer and in availability of treatment options. I have an understanding of those factors. I have assimilated them into my life and work. It has made me mindful about how to go about making change.

One of the things that has most assisted me as I came to Livestrong is that I came from a place of mission, and so I come back full circle, in that my desires as a child were to help others and to make changes: system change, individual change. At Komen, one of the things that was critical was my role as chief mission officer to remind people what we were there to do and what our job was, why it was important and why it had to continue. And so any time there is any kind of crisis, focus on what is your core value...why are you here, what makes you relevant and what makes you needed, and the answer in work we do in [the] philanthropic sector is very clear, regardless of sector: Every nonprofit is serving some important goal. Livestrong is a wonderful place to work because we are all so personally tied to the mission.

When I came to Livestrong, I said that this team, regardless of what has happened over the years, has taken the opportunity, the money, the gifts and the talent, and has served the community, the individual and the system every single day. Even through the crisis times, this organization has been there for the patient. I believed that this organization deserved to be heard again and that there was important work to be done here. You have to focus on the mission and not on the personality of the founder. Personally, all of us are very grateful that someone like Lance Armstrong, who had battled cancer, came forward to bring his struggle into the light and founded an organization that has helped so many. Livestrong has never been about one person. While one person may have chosen to share their survivorship story, that story has empowered us to serve millions and millions of people, and for that, I will be forever grateful to him. Being a leader in the nonprofit sector who has seen controversies, I would just say that this is all about the mission, and that is our litmus. That is our compass and where we must focus. Anything that deviates away from that attention to the mission is not where we should be. Livestrong's mission is not personality oriented and not about one person. At the end of the day, he was a human being that fought a disease that many others do, and many others resonated with that part of his story. I choose to focus on what his role has been in cancer awareness and advocacy.

Innovation and courage are the same and different in some ways. In order to innovate, that means you have to have the courage to disrupt, and you have to be OK with that. You have to be willing to say, "We are not just going to evolve. We are going to leapfrog," and you have to know where and when you can do those things. You have to be smart about the opportunities when they come along, and have to be able to creatively [envision] what it is possible to do. Then you need to be able to execute. We view ourselves as an accelerator, a catalyst and passionate advocates who can be nimble and can absorb new ideas and vet them. A part of courage and innovation is knowing what to say no to. It is a very important thing to do, especially for this organization that usually said yes to everything because there was enough money to do so. We are now in a limited-resource environment, so that kind of environment takes a lot of know-how and belief in your team and in partners and donors. Also [important is] setting priorities and focusing in one place and not another because we have a larger vision, and that is something you will see from us going forward into the next two to three years. Everything will be tailor-made for that larger objective, and that objective is really the thing that will drive Livestrong to be what it will become. If we are pushing the envelope and attempt to move the needle, we might fail at some things. Probably, in order to be successful, you often fail first. I view a lot of this in my role as CEO as saying, "What is the balanced portfolio? Where can we take those risks? Where do we have to take risks and where can we shore things up so that we can continue on our mission?" We have already begun this process. We are already being able to serve more people with less cost and with the same quality, and that trifecta is not easy to achieve. We talk a lot about what does stability look like, what does sustainability look like and what are the far-reaching kinds of exciting things we can do and what strategies will get us there?

I have always loved science and at one time thought I wanted to be a doctor. But I realized that I wasn't meant to be seeing patients on a one-to-one basis. I was passionate about service on a larger scale and ways to make a maximum impact on a community. My degree in public health made me realize that was what I was meant to do. The depth and breadth of that educational experience was enthralling in so many ways. I got a deep understanding of policy and what needed to be done through patient advocacy. While I do care about the individual, I feel that I get to serve the individual's community and help change the system.

Authenticity is an important quality for me as a leader, and leaders aren't perfect; they are real. We really don't have a hierarchy here. We do have an organizational structure, but the team really isn't about who sits in what seat. It is about what levels of accountability we all have when things go well and don't go so well. I am here to take that responsibility as the leader of the organization. The other thing really personally important to me is transparency, and I think the nonprofit sector needs more of it, and I think we need to define what that means, how a donor can feel that their money is going where they want it to go and that we educate the general public about how nonprofits work. You have to run it with a strong, ethically minded business sense, and if you don't, it doesn't last. How do we set the bar and set the example and go bold and remind people that, yes, we are in it for the mission and how they can see that we are doing that? We know who we are and we are confident in who we are. We don't try to be anyone else. We don't shirk away from our responsibility to be true to ourselves, and what that means is that we have the ability to open up partnerships. Rather than looking at a competitive way to do things, we really do seek to partner. A lot of our greatest successes in the past have been with partnerships, and we will do it in an authentic way.



Chandini Portteus sees Chairman of the Board Candice Aaron off at the starting line of the 19th Team Livestrong Austin Challenge, through which 2,200 riders, runners and walkers raised money to improve the lives of people affected by cancer.



The Portteus family relocated to Austin from Dallas when Chandini Portteus accepted the position of president and CEO at the Livestrong Foundation.

CHANDINI PORTEUS' MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMEN

1.

My mom, **Amy Kumar**, my first and most amazing teacher, who raised me to have great faith, trained me to lead and to exercise service and love in all I do. She is also a strong woman who held me to the standards she knew I could achieve, and supported me to get there.

2.

Ambassador Nancy G. Brinker, known to many as the founder of Susan G. Komen, but to me, a personal mentor and model of what it's like to make a promise, have a dream, change the world while achieving it and do it with kindness and grace under the harshest of pressures and perceptions.

3.

Tina Fey and Amy Poehler, two bold inspirations to me of what authenticity, beauty, brilliance and fun really are. They remind me to laugh, and that I'm best when I'm me.

4.

Susan Hill Carlisle, a wise woman who was the Montessori preschool teacher of all four of my children, but taught me along the way about motherhood, adaptability, the realities of grief, resilience and unconditional love. What a gift she gave our family.

5.

Sarah McLachlan. The arts and music inspire me, and every major milestone of my adolescence and adulthood to date has been accompanied by one of Sarah's heart-opening and sharing pieces. [It's] a soulful soundtrack to my ever-chaotic life.

Photos courtesy of Chandini Portteus.



Olemonous navy sweater dress, \$79; Stuart Weitzman Highland over-the-knee boots, \$375, available at Nordstrom; 2901 S. Capital of Texas Hwy., 512.491.3500, nordstrom.com; Jen7 grey leggings, \$195, available at Neiman Marcus; 3400 Palm Way, 512.719.1200, neimanmarcus.com; Serre cuff, \$78, available at lorenhope.com; Isaac Tusk necklace, \$325, available at empirestatefertility.com.

In order to be a good leader, you must believe in your organization's mission and purpose. That comes first, and if you are not willing to make the tough decisions and believe you can do it, that you have the skills to do the job, you will not succeed. You have to surround yourself with the best team. I am emblematic of so many people, not just the people who work here, not just our staff, but our volunteers, our donors and our Livestrong Leaders program. At the end of day, the high-level thinking that drove me as a child, which was to institute system change and the ability to invoke change, is where I am going to take our partnerships and create a bold vision and take risk-taking action to get there. I believe in trust, authenticity, flexibility and faith in your staff. That is the way to a productive future if you want to be a leader.

I am married to a doctor who is still commuting to Dallas, and we have four children: twin boys aged 7 and two girls ages 5 and 4. They are the sweetest, happiest children, and it has been a joy to raise them in a philanthropic culture. They have learned what it means to work in my field, and they see what Daddy does, which is he is a psychiatrist who treats patients that are sick, and what kind of sick. We are very open and talk about it. I do wonder how much to tell them about cancer. They go with me to many fundraising events. At the last Livestrong Challenge a month ago, they were there with their Livestrong gear. When I was at Komen, they would go to races with me. So they grew up with it. I sat down with the boys and said, "Do you understand why we go to these events?" And they said, "Yes, to raise money," and I said, "What are we raising money for?" And they said, "To help people with cancer." I said, "Do you know what cancer is?" And, at the age of 6, one of them said, "Yes. It is when the cells in someone's body are growing way too much and way too fast, and that makes them sick." All I can say is they must have been hearing a lot of conference calls and absorbed what was being said. As a working mom with that many young children, it is important to me that they understand what I do and that it is important work because it is a fact that my work takes me away from them.

I don't believe in the term "work-life balance" as most people define it, and maybe that is because of the kind of work or life I have chosen. What I do believe in is having a strong, healthy sense of and awareness of what your work-life intersection is. What that means is that you have to be honest with yourself that it is not going to be balanced. Sometimes, I have to be more focused on my work. For me, it has been helpful not to set it up as work-life balance because that is not an achievable measure. What is the more realistic way to view it? It is like we want to check the box, but that is really holding us to a place where we feel like we're failing if we don't have it balanced. I think it is important, regardless of gender, that leaders have certain skills. You should know how to negotiate, to lead courageously and to innovate. Learn whatever it is that you need to do within the role that is assigned and gifted to you. I think it is possible to lead while you recognize and acknowledge that, "I am a mom." Here at Livestrong, we don't have rigid policies around times and ways we work. We don't have a set PTO policy. We come and go and are flexible, not just for moms; that is for everyone. If you need to go let your dog out, that's OK. We have a lot of faith in each other as a team and a culture, believing that we are going to show up and do the work. I believe in my people and they deserve that trust. I had to fight for it as a female executive climbing the ladder, having four babies in four years in a very contentious political environment. [There are] questions of setting priorities, knowing what they are and understanding that sometimes, it is necessary for one priority to overtake the other, but having hopes that you can reach some kind of equilibrium. Our lives aren't balanced, for the most part. We have different seasons and times that we ebb and flow. Work-life balance may be a myth or ideal that we don't necessarily have to hold ourselves to. People define it for themselves as they do because that is where their happiness will come from.

Living every minute with every ounce of her being is a way of life for Chandini Porteus. A ball of determined energy, she is focused, fierce, smart and strong. Livestrong couldn't be in better hands, for in the words of its manifesto, "attitude is everything."

LIVESTRONG, BY THE NUMBERS

\$23 million-plus

Livestrong Fertility Services provides clients with education about fertility risks and family-building options, and has helped save patients more than \$23 million in fertility-preservation costs. Through November, Livestrong Fertility Services served more than 1,200 men and women, and saved about \$6 million in medication, storage and other costs.

100,000-plus

Livestrong Navigation has supported more than 100,000 people through free programs and services, including emotional counseling, insurance management, clinical-trial matching and guidance about treatment options. Livestrong Navigation is currently serving 45 patients per week in partnership with the Patient Advocate Foundation.

33,000-plus

Livestrong at the YMCA has helped more than 33,000 cancer survivors regain their strength, energy levels, muscle mass and quality of life through a free or low-cost 12-week exercise program. Through the program, there are currently 449 funded sites in 37 states, and eight sites in the greater Austin area.

**CHANDINI PORTEUS' FIVE THINGS
TO CONSIDER WHEN
DECIDING TO SUPPORT AN
ORGANIZATION OR CHARITY**

1.

Your personal alignment with
the organization's mission

2.

How transparent the organization is; making sure
your money is directly supporting the mission

3.

Whether the leadership team is authentic,
both internally and externally

4.

Its performance in the past and if it has a history
of showing success in fulfilling its mission

5.

Whether it fulfills unmet needs in the world rather
than duplicating work that is already being done

GET INVOLVED WITH LIVESTRONG

Facebook: [facebook.com/livestrong](https://www.facebook.com/livestrong)

Instagram: @livestrong

Twitter: @livestrong, @portteusc

livestrong.org

Sachin and Babi Milton skirt, \$695; Tassel
necklace, \$120; Alexis Bittor gold cuff,
\$225; Alexis Bittor statement ring, \$150;
Alexander Wang Kendal booties, \$595,
available at Neiman Marcus, 3400 Palm
Way, 512.719.1200, neimanmarcus.com;
blouse, model's own.

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