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Around the Columns

Wearing purple for a purpose

By Kelly Nelson

Ashley Hasty had never heard of Crohn's disease when she was diagnosed last spring, and she felt alone in her struggle. Six hospital trips and a surgery later, she is now in remission and working hard to get the word out about the disease through her Purple Dress Project.



Ashley Hasty combined her interests in fashion and blogging to raise money for Crohn's and colitis research. Photo courtesy of Lollipop Photography

Each day of April, Hasty, a doctoral candidate in the Department of

Textile and Apparel Management, will wear the same purple dress, which was designed by her friend Janna Merciel, a graduate of Stephens College. Daily, Hasty posts a photo of herself in the same dress paired with different accessories along with information about Crohn's disease on her blog, *A Hasty Life*. Hasty combined her hobbies to come up with the idea.

"I already have a fashion background, and I've had a blog for awhile, so I wanted to combine my passions for blogging, social media and fashion all in one to raise awareness about Crohn's," she says.

Crohn's disease is an incurable condition in which a person's immune system attacks the colon. Hasty says she created the project to raise money for the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America (CCFA).

Because the condition's symptoms often affect bowel movements, Hasty decided to go for a




more “stylish” approach to the project.

“The disease and symptoms are often embarrassing for people who have it, so I wanted to bring a glamorous touch to the project,” she says. “I chose a purple dress because it’s a pretty color but is also the color of the ribbon for Crohn’s disease.”

As of mid-April, Hasty had already raised \$1,280 of her \$5,000 goal. The money she raises will go directly to research about Crohn’s and colitis. However, she says her main objective is to increase awareness about the relatively unknown disease and understanding of patients battling Crohn’s.

“My main goal is to tell people about the disease and how awful it is so they can help others and be more understanding of people who have it,” she says. “I have already received emails from more people than I can count who have Crohn’s disease telling me their stories and thanking me for getting the word out there, so I already feel like it’s been a success.”

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