

## UCLA Spirit Squad Newsletter, July 2014

*Alumni Spotlight continued...*



If you met Lisa and me today, you would never guess that we are both naturally shy individuals. Although very different people, we had that in common. Even though there were thousands of students on campus, being shy with low self-confidence made it difficult for us to make friends and connect with people. As young college students, we did not know the UCLA Spirit Squad program would change both of us for the better, and we continue to reap the rewards to this day.

Lisa was in cheerleading from junior high through her senior year in high school. As a freshman, the UCLA Spirit Squad made an immediate impression with her at orientation, which inspired her to attend clinics and learn to coed partner stunt. In 1995, Lisa was a quiet and relatively timid person, but she was confident when it came to her ability to learn new skills in the sport of cheerleading.

On the other hand, I was shy and lacked confidence on many fronts. I was a lineman on my high school's football team and always struggled with being overweight. Because of my size and lack of cheerleading experience, I did not believe being on the UCLA Spirit Squad was possible for me. However, my roommate Jeremy, who was on the current squad at the time, remained adamant that I work out with him and get in shape for auditions. Although I had significant doubts, I made the decision to go for it and in the process lost nearly 40 pounds. My life would never be the same.



Lisa was a member of the UCLA Spirit Squad for three years while I was on the team for two. Looking back at that experience, it was a time of exponential personal development and growth, and increasing our self-confidence was only the start. We both learned the value of persevering through challenges, driving collaboration, modeling leadership behaviors and preparing to succeed in dynamic scenarios.

Our experience on the UCLA Spirit Squad not only shaped our time as students, but it transcended



graduation and continues to be an asset for both of us. Whether it is an audience of one or a crowd that fills Pauley Pavilion, the importance of connecting with people is a valuable skill that continues to pay dividends in our personal and professional lives. As a communications executive with Johnson & Johnson, managing and shaping the perception of the company internally and externally is critical for my role. Knowing how to present myself and position an initiative is a skill I can certainly attribute to lessons learned in the blue and gold uniform.



In addition, Lisa and I have remained involved in the cheerleading industry, from teaching camps and judging national competitions to coaching high school cheerleading squads. Last year, Lisa and I became the head cheerleading coaches at Calvary Chapel High School in Costa Mesa, CA. Together we teach our athletes the importance of professionalism on and off the field, which is very much influenced by the UCLA tradition we know and love.

Fast forwarding to today, Lisa and I now have two wonderful little girls and will be celebrating our twelfth wedding anniversary this November. Whether watching UCLA games on television, visiting the ever-changing campus or stunting at homecoming, the two of us are extremely grateful for our experiences on the UCLA Spirit Squad. Being UCLA cheerleaders transformed us and set a trajectory for our lives together. Our hope is that the program continues to grow and positively impact the futures of other students who are simply looking for ways to connect with UCLA.

