Alumni Profile

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION ALUMNA USES COMMUNICATION TOOLS TO REVOLUTIONIZE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PRACTICES

By Lucy Constantino, Strategic Communication Senior

Jane Johnson has always been a people-person. Graduating in 2011 with an MS in Strategic Communication through the University of Denver’s Media, Film and Journalism Studies (MFJS) department, Johnson credits a history of nannying, teaching and mentoring that eventually led her to her current position as the Communication & Engagement Leader for Whole Kids Foundation (WKF) and Whole Cities Foundation, two of the nonprofits from Whole Foods Market (WFM).

“In undergrad, I taught reading in second grade for one year through Teach for America and realized just how hard being a teacher is,” Johnson said. “What a difficult job requiring a tough and huge heart. I knew I wanted to be in communications in a professional setting. Since I am pretty heavily tattooed, I researched companies with high acceptance of individuality and Whole Foods Market certainly has that reputation.”

As the Communication & Engagement Leader for WKF, Johnson is responsible for leading all marketing and communication strategy, managing a team comprised of a writer, designer, social media specialist and an external branding firm. Whole Kids Foundation has an organizational goal to support schools, inspire families and nourish kids, and has several grant programs that include school salad bars and garden grants, Extended Learning Garden grants, Honey Bee Grants, and Healthy Teacher Training.

“We currently have placed more than 4,000 salad bars in the U.S., have gifted more than 650 garden grants and trained over 10,000 teachers to make [living] healthy a habit,” said Johnson. “Within the last year we launched the Healthy Kids Innovation Grant, which is seeking the next evolution of programs to revolutionize the way our kids eat at school and home.”

Her work with Whole Kids Foundation has had tangible impacts on children. Citing the garden program specifically as an amazing curriculum, Johnson explained that studies have demonstrated that children who grow anything are 52 times more likely to try something; and children with a salad bar program their school eats three times the amount of fruits and vegetables than a child without a school salad bar.

Johnson has hopes of launching a product line in partnership with Whole Foods Market in the near future, in order to reach a new demographic of families and start conversations on living a happy and healthy lifestyle.

“Getting kids hooked on delicious, natural foods at a young age has a huge potential for global impact,” she said. “The skills children learn through gardening and practicing environmental stewardship are not only relevant to their diets but also to the classroom. Just about any academic topic can be taught through the garden.”

Johnson was drawn to DU for her masters because it was a change of pace from her hometown of Austin, TX. She was drawn to the challenging master’s program in Strategic Communication and found that at the University of Denver she was pushed to reach her full potential: a challenge that she has carried over into her work with WFK.

“The University of Denver’s MFJS school helps provide more than an education; they help students learn HOW to think and analyze the information that they seek,” she said. “I was encouraged to fully be ‘Jane’ and pursue areas of studies that were so unique to me, without judgment and with full support.”

So what’s Johnson’s message on the importance of maintaining a well-balanced lifestyle and a healthy, happy earth for future generations?

“Every day is a new chance to make healthy choices for you and our planet. Do something everyday that makes your body feel good and that makes planet Earth smile!”