

Local Diabetes Walk raises nearly \$10K towards cure

By **JULIE WHITE**
 Staff Writer

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month, and with that in mind, national organizations such as the American Diabetes Association (ADA), the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), and many more are running special campaigns and events throughout the month to support those who battle the disease, and to continue in the search for a cure.

Locally each year, Lisa Treese, a Tyrone elementary Kindergarten teacher, organizes a Diabetes Walk at Foot of Ten Elementary School in Altoona to raise funds for the Diabetes Research Institute (DRI) at the University of Miami in Florida. On Saturday, September 26, many teams and walkers assembled to raise funds once again towards a cure for diabetes.

Over the past seven years, since Treese has been organizing the walk, the effort has raised over \$100,000. This year alone, walkers raised nearly \$10,000. Funds are sent to the DRI, where research to find a cure for Type 1 Diabetes is moving along. Treese said, "They transplanted their first BioHub patient. They are trying to find another place to transplant, since the liver isn't making the new islet cells after the transplant—along with a host of other things that have been going wrong." Vice President of the **DRI Foundation**, Tom Karlya travels to the walk. "He has two kids with Type 1, and most of the people in the DRI have family with it," Treese said.

Last year, the walk had about 500 people. Treese

said that it was a bit smaller this year, but she is hoping to make a flyer and advertise more for next year's event. "It was still wonderful for the kids, and that's what it's all about. We read excerpts from each family about their child(ren), and the kids stood on a chair and waved to everyone. You should have seen their faces! They even said, 'Thank you for supporting me,'" Treese said.

Treese said, "I make an attempt to find kids so they can meet other kids. I wanted my son to know other kids going through the same emotions, and for me to find some moms!" Treese's own son, Zach, was diagnosed with Type 1 when he was just three years old. He is now 11. "I quit teaching before he was born, so thankfully I was home to deal with it at such a young age," Treese said. At the time, in their area, Treese said, "Preschools didn't want him. I found one at my church, ironically, that said, 'bring him here, we will take care of him!'"

The support here in Tyrone is quite different. There are and have been several

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diabetic children at the Tyrone Area Elementary School (TAES), both in the preschool and in older grades, and the support is phenomenal, according to parents. One parent of a diabetic child in the district, who is now in high school, describes TAES Nurse Brenda Cowger as very capable, kind, and caring and said, "I had no worries at the elementary school. Brenda was fantastic, as were all of the teachers, without excep-

tion. They all took very good care of my child."

Type 1 Diabetes is an autoimmune disease that tends to begin during childhood, which is why it was formerly known as Juvenile Diabetes. Unlike Type 2 Diabetes, Type 1 does not happen as a result of diet or lack of exercise. It can happen to anyone, even in infancy, and is a result of the body's own immune system attacking cells in the pancreas, shutting down the natural function of processing sugars/carbohydrates. Type 1 Diabetics are insulin-dependent, and must test their blood through needle sticks several times each day (and night), and receive insulin injections throughout the day, at meals, and at bedtime, in order to keep blood sugars within a healthy range. Type 1 Diabetic children, unlike other children who might get shots a few times each year, must receive injections many times each day. Even those who forgo regular injections to wear an insulin pump must change the pump site, similar to an IV site, every few days. It is a disease that, while manageable, they must live with every hour of every day for the rest of their lives, or until a cure is found.

For more information about the DRI, visit www.diabetesresearch.org. For more information or to become involved in the local Diabetes Walk next year, send e-mail to Lisa Treese at lisatreese@verizon.net.

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Local teacher, Lisa Treese, organizes a Diabetes Walk each year, raising funds for the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation. Pictured is last year's ribbon cutting team, including (from left) Tom Karlya, vice president from the DRIF, Lenny Lidwell of Cresson, and Treese. (Submitted Photo)