

# Sanofi Diabetes

## The Diabetes Experience

### Sibling Love

Contributed by Moira McCarthy  
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Toronto Blue Jays pitcher J.A. Happ and elementary school student Ashley Bringer don't seem to have a lot in common: Happ spends his days as a professional baseball player reaching back and throwing out one of his five specialty pitches, zinging it into the catcher's mitt and befuddling batters. Fifth grader Ashley is more likely to be found talking to the administrators at her elementary school, giving a presentation she's created on her own, impressing listeners.

But the two are working, in their different ways, toward the same goals: support, compassion, and funding for a cure for a sibling who lives with [type 1 diabetes](#).

For Happ, his big sister Heather's diagnosis nearly ten years ago was "a shock." Scared for her at first, Happ watched her grow into a life with diabetes on board, eventually marrying and having children. He was thrilled to see her husband become a true partner in her life with diabetes as well. But still, as her brother, he wanted to make a difference.

That difference came via his baseball glove and amazing throwing arm. When Happ was awarded the MLB Players Choice Award for Outstanding Rookie Award in the National League in 2009, he knew exactly what he was going to do with the \$20,000 prize: donate it to the [Diabetes Research Institute](#) (DRI) in Miami, where he believed progress was being made for a cure for his sister – and for so many others affected by type 1 diabetes.

Heather said she was almost "taken aback," by her brother's donation. "There are so many good and important causes out there," she said. "I was honored that he thought of me right away." But considering how J.A. had learned all he could about her diabetes, and had supported her in every way since her diagnosis, Heather realized she should not have been surprised.

"I always say I am more proud of him for the *person* he is than for the baseball player he is," she said. "He has a big, big heart. I am humbled by his generosity."

For Ashley Bringer, seeing her little brother diagnosed several years ago (when she was seven), was overwhelming. "We had to learn to do so many new things, like measure his food, [count out his carbs](#), and figure out [insulin](#)," the now eleven-year-old said. "I wanted to do something to make it better."

Ashley read about the [JDRF Walk to Cure Diabetes](#) and decided that she could enlist her school in her efforts. Quite literally, her mother, Dawn, said, "Ashley marched into the principal's office with a PowerPoint presentation I knew nothing about and made her case for a fundraiser at school." Ashley's pitch was a hit – in a good way. The school held a ribbon-selling event, and Ashley not only raised nearly \$1,000 for [JDRF](#), she raised awareness about type 1 diabetes. Now, she said, everyone in her school understands what it means for her brother to live with diabetes. And they want to support a cure. She also wants her little brother to know that she's been there for him all along.

“When he grows up and he knows more what to do, he’ll be better at taking care of himself,” she said. “But things will get better too, and there will be a cure. And he’ll read about this and know his sister helped. That makes me happy.”

The sibling love continues: Happ speaks for DRI and continues to support them. He will always, he said, until his sister is cured. “The DRI is strictly focused on finding a cure for diabetes,” he said. “They have some exciting research and trials.”

And while Ashley is moving to middle school next year, she’s helping another sibling, her younger sister, learn the ropes of the school fundraiser, and plotting to launch another fundraiser at her new school. “We are not done yet,” she said. “I mean, he’s not cured yet, right? So how can we be done?”

A little brother and a big sister with talents they’re willing to use to change the world. I’d call it the perfect pitch.

*Moira McCarthy is an acclaimed writer, author, and public speaker who has shared her story – and lessons – on raising a child living with type 1 diabetes in the media, through books, and on her popular blog, [despitediabetes.com](http://despitediabetes.com). McCarthy has appeared on CNN Live, Good Morning America, and Fox News. She was recently recognized as the JDRF International Volunteer of the Year. Her six books include the top-selling [The Everything Parent’s Guide to Children With Juvenile Diabetes](#) and her newest [Raising Teens With Diabetes: A Survival Guide For Parents](#). McCarthy is a paid contributor for *The DX*. All opinions contained in this article reflect those of the contributor, and not of Sanofi US, its employees, agencies, or affiliates.*

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