

From Our Champions

Our Life with Diabetes

By Evan Kramer • West Bloomfield, MI • A1C Champion (Youth/Parent Team)



Waiting in my son's pediatrician's office, for what I thought would be a bladder infection diagnosis, I remembered back 40 years ago when I was told my brother had type 1 diabetes. I was 8, he was 13, and I learned that he would have to urinate into a cup to test his blood sugar all day long, eat on a very restricted diet, and would need to give himself insulin shots every day for the rest of his life. Back then, without today's insulin pumps, blood glucose meters, and carbohydrate count diets, living with type 1 diabetes in my house was an early death-sentence and a disease that made you feel different. Nobody would talk about it. My brother may have looked normal but imagine questioning everything you ate, trying to get enough exercise, and wondering how stress and hormones would affect his blood sugar...and still trying to be a normal, carefree 13-year-old kid.

My son Tyler was 10 when the doctor told me he had type 1 diabetes. I felt guilty and also responsible. Research shows this disease is not hereditary. I try to believe it, but my sister was also diagnosed when she was 23. I grew up seeing how diabetes had dominated both my siblings' lives and I made a commitment to myself that I wouldn't let Tyler live that way.

From the moment Tyler was diagnosed, when he was lying in the hospital with an IV in his arm, my wife and I made a conscious decision to be diabetes advocates and made it our mission to do everything we could to find a cure and to provide Tyler with the best treatment options available to him. We try to instill a positive attitude in Tyler so he doesn't let diabetes stop him from doing anything he wants and reaching his dreams.

While our life has changed dramatically and dealing with diabetes is often overwhelming and challenging for Tyler and our family, it also has had a positive side.

We've participated in many fundraising activities, and raised over \$50,000 for diabetes research for a cure. Tyler has received numerous awards and recognition

for his fundraising and community service efforts, including the 2009 American Diabetes Association Cure-Care-Commitment Award. He also has received a Michigan Week Community Service Award from Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm, the Kohl's Kids Who Care award, and was an Agent of Change at our school district's celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

We try to connect and help other children with diabetes. We recently launched our own non-profit organization, D.R.E.A.M. - Diabetes Research & Education Advocates of Michigan, at www.dreamforacure.com, and have committed to raising \$100,000 for the University of Michigan diabetes research programs. Through our foundation, we offer scholarships for college students with diabetes, and facilitate programs with family support groups through PMI. We have made it our mission to find a cure for this horrible and debilitating disease that affects over 20 million Americans, including our son, Tyler.



Tyler Kramer