

## My Day With Diabetes -- August 2007

Diabetes is a life changing disease requiring difficult lifestyle adjustments. Nearly 21 million people across the country -- including 70,000 Delawareans -- are living with this disease everyday. In a program sponsored by the American Diabetes Association, I had the opportunity to be "diagnosed" for a "Day with Diabetes" to gain a better understanding of the impact this disease has on the lives of so many people. As Co-Chair of the Congressional Diabetes Caucus in the House of Representatives, I knew the basics of this disease but quickly learned how overwhelming it is to live within its confines and the difficulty and discipline needed to manage the disease.

To understand my diagnosis, I first met with certified diabetes educators in Washington, D.C. to discuss my treatment plan. From careful diet and eating habits, to checking blood sugar levels and administering insulin shots, I realized the challenges of managing diabetes are constant. My partner for the day was CJ Jones of Hockessin, who has lived with type 1 diabetes for the last 30 years. Since she was diagnosed in her early 20's so many of the decisions she has made in her life have been based on this condition.

CJ and I spent the afternoon at Christiana Care's Center for Diabetes & Metabolic Diseases, where she has been receiving treatment for years. Dr. Robert Laskowski and Dr. James Lenhard of Christiana Care Health System and Dr. Ann Albright of the American Diabetes Association joined us in touring the center and discussing the impact of diabetes in Delaware and across the nation. The facilities and cutting-edge research at Christiana Care are keeping Delaware at the forefront of expanding our knowledge of diabetes.

Christiana Care is working hard to both treat and prevent diabetes. It is one of only 17 centers nationwide testing a new study drug called teplizumab, which may improve the long-term health of diabetics. This type of research can and should be duplicated nationwide.

Diabetes is a disease that changes the way you have to think about living your life. Those of us without this disease can take so many elements of our life for granted. After seeing what CJ deals with on a daily basis, I have a better understanding of what it means to live every day with diabetes. Though she works with great determination and a smile on her face to keep herself healthy, CJ's burden is a reminder that we have a responsibility to pursue a cure.

We need to do more to research this disease and educate the public, particularly in the area of prevention. The Diabetes Caucus is supporting several bills to advance research and promote prevention and treatment. Legislation includes ensuring Medicare beneficiaries with pre-diabetes have access to Medical Nutrition Therapy; expanding education in minority communities; establishing a National Diabetes Report Card; and securing funding for research at the

National Institutes of Health and at the Centers for Disease Control are all fundamental ways we can combat Diabetes. The potential for curing diabetes may lie in Embryonic Stem Cell Research. I have spearheaded the initiative in Congress to increase this research for several years now. This research has such a great potential to improve lives that I believe it is only a matter of time before the possibilities are realized.