

## “FEED THE PIG” CHALLENGE

Hello! I am Lion Bonnie, and I'm a member of the Lions Club of New Ulm. As many of you know, I'm a blind person. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you Lions for all the hard work you have done for people of the visually impaired community, whether it is collecting eyeglasses, supporting the Leader Dog program, or raising funds for the Eye Bank of the U of M.

Many of you have wondered how much I can see, as most blind people still have some vision. I always respond with a smile and say, “I can see a color...black...and as far as I know, that color is still in the Crayola crayon box!” ☺ Thus, I have no sight at all. When people express their sympathy for my lack of vision and compliment me on my good attitude, I always respond with “Well, blindness is not terminal!” What caused my blindness? The answer to that is Type 1 diabetes. I consider myself so fortunate to be alive after living with Type 1 diabetes for over 50 years. That is why I am writing (yes, I use a computer) this letter in order to share with you my journey with my disease. I am one of the many numerous faces behind the purpose of the Spring Point Project program. I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes in 1962 when I was 11 yrs. old. At that time it was referred to as “Juvenile Diabetes”. It usually targeted children in the 10, 11, and 12 year old range. Today for some unexplainable reason, the target range of years has been lowered to 3, 4, and 5 years. Type 1, unlike Type 2, is an autoimmune disease. No, it is not caused by eating too much sugar or from obesity. Type 1 occurs when, for some unknown reason, the body's own immune system attacks the pancreas and damages it so that it can no longer produce the hormone insulin. Everyone needs insulin to survive. Treatment for Type 1 diabetes is ALWAYS insulin injections, along with monitoring glucose levels, a healthy diet and exercise, followed up by regular doctor visits. Throughout time, the treatment for diabetes has improved quite significantly with the invention of the insulin pump, but it is a far cry from a “cure”.

Walk with me as I take you through a “normal” day. As soon as I wake up in the morning, I must prick one of my fingers to take a blood test to see what my glucose (sugar) level is. (I have a talking glucometer) I do this procedure at least 5-6 times daily to observe my glucose levels. This is done before eating any meal or snack so I can determine how much insulin to inject. I have to manually perform the function of the pancreas. I take into consideration what my glucose level is at that time, count the carbohydrates I am about to consume, and then calculate in my head how much insulin to inject. I inject myself with insulin 4-5 times daily using two different types of insulin. To date, I have given myself approximately over 42,000 insulin shots. That amount doesn't even include the number of needle pricks on my fingers! ☺ Injecting insulin can be rather tricky; however, as too much insulin can cause hypoglycemia, which can lead to death. Living with Type 1 diabetes is like walking on a balance beam, not only for a few days, months, or even years; it is for the rest of your life. It is vital that you don't have too much or too little glucose in your blood. There are many variables which may alter one's glucose level to swing in the wrong direction. Too much or not enough insulin injected, too much or not enough food consumed, too much or not enough exercise, or

even experiencing sickness such as colds, flu, infections, and stress can alter glucose levels.

Diabetes is a chronic disease which can lead to many secondary complications. Did you know that it is a leading cause of blindness, kidney failure, heart failure, amputations, nerve damage, and strokes? I can tell you the names of two people who have had diabetes as long as I, and have no secondary complication; but I can, unfortunately, tell you that I know at least ten people who are no longer with us because they died premature deaths as a result of Type 1 diabetes. I especially think of Diane who first lost her sight, then suffered loss of kidney function and had a kidney transplant, followed by the amputation of one of her legs, only to lose her life before she turned 40 yrs. old. Lions, do you remember Lion Red Martinka? His daughter-in-law's younger brother died from Type 1 diabetes when he was only 36 years old. David had also undergone a kidney transplant, only to die from a massive heart attack a few months later. I know of several diabetics who are currently either blind, undergoing kidney dialysis, are dealing with heart issues, suffering with painful diabetic neuropathy, or have had an amputation of one of their limbs. Some of these people have more than one complication to deal with at the same time.

The object of this letter is not to gain sympathy, but I just want to make all of you aware of the complications a Type 1 diabetic may encounter along their life's journey. I have always dreamed of a life with NO MORE multiple daily insulin shots, NO MORE testing our blood for glucose levels, NO MORE counting carbohydrates, NO MORE worries about all those secondary complications: but most of all, NO MORE fear of hypoglycemia which is a condition in which our blood glucose levels drop too low. If we are unable to immediately secure a source of sugar, this condition will put us into a diabetic coma which could result in death. Kathy, Carol, Jodi, and Janie all were Type 1 diabetics who died under this circumstance. I don't intend to sound like I have a miserable life, for I truly enjoy living! If I could, however, prevent a child from following my footsteps in their journey through life, I would be so extremely happy!

Now the time has come where I truly believe my dream can be fulfilled. With the Spring Point Project program, we have a good chance of a CURE! Thank you, Lions, for supporting the Spring Point Project in its effort to win the war against this deadly disease. Every coin or bill you feed into the "Pig" gives us more financial support for ammunition for a victory in eradicating Type 1 diabetes! I'm sure you have heard the expression, "He eats like a pig!" Therefore, I challenge you, Lions, to double your monthly donation to feed the "pig"! Every month if each member could sacrifice the cost of just one extra cup of coffee/tea/beer or whatever drink you prefer...you would have the power to help make a dramatic change not only to my life and the lives of many others, but also the lives of future Type 1 diabetics! Remember...the money donated is not for a new treatment; it is for an actual CURE!!! Now with renewed hope knowing that the Lions have come to our rescue; I feel confident going into battle with a pride of fearless Lions supporting us! ☺

So off into battle we go fellow Lions, not to destroy lives....but to save them!! ROAR!!!