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Children with Diabetes® 2009 Friends for Life Report - Thursday

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7:15 a.m. Already over 80 degrees and muggy. The **Novo Nordisk** inflated arch – now a standard at the beginning of every CWD conference Fun Run – was in place. Harold Sanco, aka Human Caffeine, started the warm-up music as CWD participants young and old joined in some stretches prior to the once-around-the-lake. 7:30... and they're off! Led by Rick Philbin, about 150 kids and parents ran, jogged, walked, strolled-coffee-in-hand around the lake to start the day off on the right foot -- with exercise! Many thanks to **Novo Nordisk** for sponsoring this seventh annual Family Fun Run, and for providing the kids who participated with very cool medals!

The fun run was followed by a very yummy and health breakfast in the Coronado Ballroom. Everyone expressed appreciation to CWD's Mike Schurig (registered dietitian and conferences manager) for the detailed attention to carb counts and portion sizes, and also the attention to special diets including a gluten free buffet especially for those with celiac. Many thanks as well to Dana Dignard, RD, who shared 'food duty' with Mike throughout the conference. They both did a great job from Tuesday through Sunday making sure that all of the information was accurate, and also making sure that the conference food was entirely nut-free!

Shortly before 9 a.m., the kids headed to their sessions, the little ones got settled in childcare, and everyone readied for the keynote. This year's keynote address, sponsored by **Abbott Diabetes Care**, was shared by Dr. Ken Moritsugu and Diabetes Dad Tom Karlya. Dr. Moritsugu, who has type 1 diabetes, shared his personal perspective about being someone who knows a lot about type 1 diabetes yet still experiences significant daily challenges himself including a recent and very frightening episode of DKA. Dr. Moritsugu stressed that health literacy is important (i.e., understanding and keeping up with information about type 1 diabetes), but that the actual management of type 1 diabetes often relies on one's own 'support village' of family, friends, and co-workers. Dr. Moritsugu drew a laugh from the audience when he described the exercise regimen he was presented with by his staff when he returned to work after the DKA episode.

Diabetes Dad Tom Karlya has devoted almost two decades to type 1 diabetes research and advocacy. Tom's message to the group was simply "Don't Do Nothing." Wherever you live, whatever you do for a living, whatever your level of resources... there is something that you can do to make a difference. Do it. Tom described his own personal journey – how his dreams changed the day his toddler, Kaitlyn, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes – and how uncannily those dreams have come true in ways he could not have imagined. Tom spoke about his diabetes



Rick Philbin led the crowd in the CWD Fun Run on Thursday morning
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Emily posed by her Quilt for Life panel (number 689)
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heroes, many of them in the room listening to his keynote. Tom continues his advocacy as Diabetes Dad and in his work with the **Diabetes Research Institute Foundation**; he asked each and every one of us in the room to begin today to make a difference, somewhere, some way. Tom closed his keynote by emotionally sharing with the audience that he is now Diabetes Dad – to two.

Thursday sessions continued with a wide variety of topics on both a beginners and more advanced level. One room in the convention center, sponsored by the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation and the **Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International**, was devoted specifically to science. Sessions included Dr. Alberto Pugliese's "Prevention and Remission," Dr. Norma Kenyon's Diabetes Research Institute update entitled "What Don't We Know and Why Don't We Know it?" and a session about the Artificial Pancreas by Stuart Weinzimer and Edward Damiano.

Other sessions focused on the psychosocial aspects of type 1 diabetes. First time *Friends for Life* presenter Bill Polonsky spoke about "Diabetes Etiquette," while Jill Weissberg-Benchell presented about "Adolescent Tipping Points," both courtesy of **Roche Diagnostics**. Joe Solowiejczk's "It's Not Just a Numbers Game" – always a favorite presentation and discussion – was once again a hit with parents.

Friends for Life offered an entire track for parents with a newly-diagnosed child. The Thursday sessions included "Reviewing What You Learned on Diagnosis Day" (Fran Kaufman), "Carb Counting in the Real World" (Dana Dignard), and "Sick Day Management" (Jen Block). These sessions were well-received by newly-diagnosed families as well as those looking for a quick review of some basic concepts of diabetes management.

Insulin pumps and continuous sensors continued to be of high interest to many conference participants. Henry Anhalt, Gary Scheiner, Natalie Bellini, and John Walsh presented sessions on both Thursday and Friday about diabetes management using these tools.

For the first time at *Friends for Life*, the young adult participants had an entire track specifically for them on both Thursday and Friday. We realized in scheduling all of the sessions that there certainly would be multiple sessions at any given time slot of interest to young adults with type 1, but we also wanted to do our best to offer topics and speakers of specific interest to them. Topics on Thursday included "The Challenge of Employment Discrimination" (John Griffin), "Sick Day Management" (Jen Block with Mike Heile), and "Disordered Eating" (Barbara Anderson).

Several sessions on Thursday focused on exercise and sports. Dr. Kim Kelly kicked off this track with a discussion about "The Physiology of Exercise." Gary Scheiner followed this presentation with "Exercise and Busy Kids." And mountaineer/adventurer Sebastien Sasseville (who has type 1 diabetes) wowed his audience by recounting his Mt. Everest summit one year ago.

Finally, the Grandparents (fondly known as The Grands during this conference) attended *Friends for Life* in force! There were about 150 Grands attending sessions, and they mixed-n-matched between the grandparents-specific discussion groups and other sessions throughout the day. Having the Grands with us at *Friends for Life* gave wonderful depth to all of the events. Grands – thanks for coming!

The kids had an absolutely fabulous time on Thursday. This year, there were so many elementary aged children that they were divided into two age groups, 6/7 year olds, and 8/9 year olds. Michelle Rago and Lauren Lanning were once again at the helm of the Elementary program, supported by over 30 volunteers (parents and college students) who spent all day Thursday and Friday with the children. In the morning, the kids had a very fun



Dr. Chuck Wiedmeyer and Dr. Ashley Foster shared PJ, the dog with diabetes, with the younger kids (and yes, PJ is wearing a Medtronic CGM sensor)
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Dr. Chuck Wiedmeyer talked with CWD's young people about diabetes technology and animals -- including using a CGM on a horse
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Grandparents learned by doing -- many sessions were hands on

ice-breaker with Joe Solowiejczyk and the elementary staff, followed by time meeting the athletes and playing basketball, volleyball, and other friendly games in Sports Central. After lunch, the children spent time Working Out with Harold (and discussing the nutrition a growing body needs for exercise!) and having some serious discussion in sibling groups and type 1 groups with Scott Scolnick and Paul Madden.

The Tween (ages 10-12) day was also jam-packed with fun activities! After the ice breaker session led by Tween Program Coordinators Melissa Ringley and Kim Kelly, the kids divided into their age groups (10s, 11s, 12s) to take turns meeting several of our VIP Special Guests who have type 1 diabetes. These included USA Triathlete Jay Hewitt, Miami Homicide Officer Jose Lopez, and Nicole Johnson, 1999 Miss America and currently one of the leading voices of advocacy for those with type 1 diabetes.

Following lunch (a wonderful deli buffet for all, sponsored by [Sanofi-Aventis](#)), the tween group spent time with PJ the Dog and her owner Ashley Foster, along with Dr. Chuck Wiedmeyer who is a veterinarian working with animals who have type 1 diabetes. PJ has type 1, and she works with Ashley as a service dog visiting people in hospitals and nursing homes. The tweens really enjoyed meeting PJ and her people, seeing how PJ has her blood glucose measured, and hearing about her diabetes management. The tweens finished off the day in Sports Central with the Special Guest athletes and the SC staff. The kids enjoyed playing basketball and volleyball, plus they had some really great questions for the athletes!

Teens had a very busy day as well, led by Teen Program Coordinator Natalie Bellini and a dozen seasoned teen staff! Because there were so many teenagers participating this year, they were separated into Younger Teens (ages 13-14) and Older Teens (ages 15-17). This was particularly helpful in their Girl Talk and Boy Talk discussion groups. The teens had several options for their breakout sessions, including a session about Transitioning to College (Jill Weissberg-Benchell), as well as a session with Sebastien Sasseville about Summiting Mt. Everest, a session with Canadian Country Music Entertainer George Canyon, and a session with Miami Homicide Officer Jose Lopez. Each of these individuals offered their unique perspective on life with type 1 diabetes – in very interesting jobs and circumstances! Later in the day, the teens also had the opportunity to discuss the process of getting a first job, as well as the opportunity to learn about type 1 diabetes in pets and other large animals. All of the teens participated in a learning experience (a modified Scavenger Hunt) in the exhibit hall, and they all spent time in Sports Central discussing the challenges of exercise and type 1 diabetes with some excellent athletes who also have type 1.

The younger crowd – under 6 – had a wonderful time in childcare this year! A big thank you to [Animas Corporation](#) for again sponsoring childcare (this is the 9th year!). In response to parent feedback last summer, we continued to divide the kids into three rooms this year. There was a K room for 5 year olds, a PreK room for 3-4 year olds, and an 'under 3' room for the littlest conference participants. This went extremely well, and the kids were quite happy with their age-appropriate activities (and nap time!). Snacks were provided to the kids right by childcare which saved a lot of time with check-in/check-outs. Mary Babin once again coordinated childcare – many thanks to Mary and her clinical staff who provided CDE support in all 3 rooms. Also many thanks to the room leaders: Pam Loebner, Stacey Nagel, Catherine Schulz, and Adriana Rodenheiser for a job well done!

On Thursday evening, the annual CWD Family and Friends Banquet was held. This year was very special – the Banquet was held in honor of the 10th Anniversary of Friends for Life. There was even a special Happy Anniversary cake!

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Sebastien Sasseville and Doug Burns, both special guests, had a chance to chat with each other

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Jeff Hitchcock presents Ellen Ullman with the Jeff Hitchcock Distinguished Service Award

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George Canyon played at the Family and Friends Banquet

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The Jeff Hitchcock Distinguished Service Award was presented to Ellen Ullman, who has devoted over 15 years to diabetes advocacy – and further, who has devoted 15 years to helping Jeff Hitchcock and CWD report on new research and information to share with CWD readers. Ellen was totally surprised – and for once, speechless!

The 2009 CWD Friend for Life award was presented to two people this year: Audrey Greenfield and David Harlan. Unfortunately, Dr. Harlan was stuck on a runway in Washington, D.C., during the Family and Friends Banquet! He was presented with his award later that evening – in honor of his unwavering dedication and research towards finding a cure for type 1 diabetes. Audrey Greenfield has supported CWD in every way possible since 2001. She has been friend, advocate, sponsor, staff, volunteer – and has pledged to continue until there is a cure. Audrey was honored for her dedication and friendship to our CWD families.

As she does each year, Laura Billetdeaux shared a personal perspective of CWD via slide show and music. This year – it was a 10 year perspective called The World According to Billetdeaux. Laura highlighted CWD events that stood out in her mind as she reviewed 10 years with CWD – the Quilt for Life, the growth and expansion of CWD events to include conferences like Orlando's Friends for Life as well as smaller conferences like Marco Island's Family Support Weekend – and as always, the thousands of smiling faces of children and parents who make up the CWD community.

Laura and Jeff then presented the Unexpected Hero Awards. This year, in honor of the 10th Anniversary of Friends for Life, CWD honored those individuals who have been with us for every single conference either as staff or as sponsors. Those individuals included Barbara Singer, Lori Weintraub, Craig Crease, Lauren Lanning, and Julia Mattingly. They each came onstage, shared a few thoughts with the audience, and took home a thank you plaque featuring the smiling faces of some of the children whose lives were touched by their generosity and kindness.

Next – a surprise. Jeff and Marissa Hitchcock were called onstage. Laura explained how, in celebrating 10 years of Friends for Life with CWD, she wanted to thank Jeff for the opportunity to work with CWD and also congratulate Marissa on her accomplishments including her recent graduation from nursing school! Canada's Country Music Entertainer of the Year George Canyon – along with his keyboard artist Mike Little – joined Laura onstage. George sang Madi's Song, which he had written in honor of his own daughter several years ago. Madi's Song accompanied a slide show featuring Marissa 'growing up.'

Next – another surprise! Jeff wanted to thank Laura for 10 years of hard work and dedication towards CWD, and he had a surprise award for her as well.

Tom Karlya and Nicole Johnson, as emcees of the evening, of course knew all the secrets and surprises, and they kept everything running smoothly and on time, including a very moving set played by George Canyon and Mike Little.

So – the final event of the evening – before the party started – was to honor and thank the conference sponsors. Always a fun highlight of the dinner! All of the conference sponsors were called onto the dance floor. DJ Charles Miles and Country Line Dance Instructor Lisa, taught all of the sponsors a dance called the CWD Stomp! They worked through the steps in short order, and then actually did the dance – to the delight (and amusement) of all watching. And then the kids joined the sponsors on the dance floor as the evening continued with DJ Miles and lots of fun country (and non-country) music. Many many thanks to the evening's sponsors **Novo Nordisk** and **LifeScan**. In addition to the cool plastic cowboy hat centerpieces and the glowy sparkly



Kids and families danced the night away on Thursday evening
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things, each of the kids had their own cowboy hat – many of which were autographed by George Canyon by the end of the evening.

A special word of thanks goes to our sponsors. We could not do this without you. You all have helped Friends for Life get off the ground and become the very special gathering that it is today, ten years after our very first event. This year's sponsors include **Novo Nordisk, LifeScan, Sanofi-Aventis, Roche Diagnostics, Abbott Diabetes Care, Eli Lilly and Company, Medtronic Diabetes, Animas Corporation, Insulet Corporation, Unomedical, American Diabetes Association, DexCom, Dex4**, the **Diabetes Research Institute and Foundation**, and the **Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International**. Quite simply: thank you.

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