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We all make a difference

Employee donations of time and money help hundreds of charities succeed

The Diabetes Research Institute (DRI) has certainly benefitted from voluntary employee charitable giving and service efforts. Since the organization's inception more than 30 years ago, a significant portion of our funding has come from employees participating in a variety of programs in large and small businesses and in government offices across the country.

Payroll deduction programs are among the easiest and most popular ways to support the Institute's ongoing research initiatives. Like the IBM Employee Charitable Contributions Campaign (ECCC), which has raised more than \$200,000 for the DRI, employees elect to donate a portion of their earnings on a regular basis. One of the largest programs that we are involved in is the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), an annual fund-raising drive conducted by Federal and military personnel each fall. Extending throughout countless communities all over the country and to military bases around the world, the campaign rallies thousands of generous workers to support the DRI and other worthy charitable causes.

Our Workplace Ambassadors take a lead role in this effort by encouraging their colleagues to join the mission to eradicate diabetes. Armed with informational literature, fact sheets, and organizational brochures, these faithful friends help spread the word about the Institute's continuing progress and the work underway to cure this devastating disease.

Hundreds of employees from companies such as Citrix Systems, Walgreens, Lockheed Martin, Florida Power & Light and For Eyes, have also spearheaded different fund-raising projects, like golf and tennis tournaments, walk-a-thons, dress-down days, shopping days, and dinner receptions, among other events, to raise critical funds for the DRI's work.

The millions of dollars contributed through employee charitable campaigns have enabled the DRI to make extraordinary strides. Only a few short years ago, scientists were reluctant to speak of a "cure." Today, a promising procedure known as islet transplantation is turning hope into reality for those living with the disease. After receiving an infusion of these insulin-producing cells of the pancreas, a number of patients are now living free from insulin injections for the first time since being diagnosed with the disease.

Though progress has been nothing short of extraordinary, there is still much work to be



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done before the DRI and other centers can offer this procedure to all who can benefit. With more than 18 million children and adults affected by diabetes in the United States alone, and the number of people with the disease reaching epidemic proportions around the world, the need to find a cure for this disease is greater than ever. Faced with this challenge, the continued generosity of IBM employees and others who participate in voluntary charitable contribution programs is also more appreciated than ever.

Robert A. Pearlman is president and chief executive officer of the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation whose sole mission is to support the Diabetes Research Institute at the University of Miami, a world leader in cure-focused research and a pioneer in islet transplantation and other cellular therapies.