

THE Importance of .

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Caring

my journey into volunteering



Dennis Cetak
 DIABETES EDUCATION

For Dennis Cetak, his daughter's diabetes diagnosis was a life-changing experience. Doctors determined she had Type 1 diabetes when she was 8 years old. Dennis worked hard to help her learn her newfound way of life, but three months later, he found out she wasn't the only one with a life-changing condition — he also had Type 1 diabetes.

"It's been interesting to see how diabetes worked its way into our family," he said. **"We've had to work with it for nearly 40 years."**

His daughter's circumstances led him to team up with Columbus Community Hospital and local families to offer a juvenile diabetes support group. Through the group, they raised money to send area kids to diabetes camps. Cetak said the camps are important because they teach kids to live with and control their diabetes.

"When my daughter started camp, she couldn't even do her shots," he said. **"But she did the shots all by herself when we returned."**

Since then, the hospital's diabetes and health education department has grown to include four diabetes-specific programs and a support group. It has also built upon Cetak's initial juvenile diabetes fundraiser

by hosting a Diabetes Awareness Day each fall, with the proceeds from the event supporting diabetes education programs and youth diabetes camps.

Cetak's involvement with the hospital doesn't stop there — he started working with its Diabetes Self-Management Program in 2004. The program's instructor approached Cetak looking for someone with diabetes to speak to the group, and he jumped at the opportunity to share his personal experience with others. In 2008, he became an official hospital volunteer and recently celebrated his 15th anniversary.

"Over the years, I've spoken with more than 300 diabetic program participants," he said. **"It's not a lot, but it's encouraging and something in my heart that I felt called to do."**

The hospital's diabetes and health education department hosts the comprehensive education class once or twice monthly, depending on class participation. During the second day of the program, Cetak shares his experience with diabetes and three main pieces of advice: accept you have diabetes, be educated about your condition and be responsible.

"I'm glad we have this program because I get to speak from the heart," he said. **"When I talk, I try to put a little fear into them because so many things can go wrong if you don't take care of yourself. We don't want diabetes to control us — we want to control diabetes."**

Cetak said he became a volunteer because he wants to help people with the same disease — it's his life's passion. If he can positively impact even one or two people to do their best and live a healthy life, he considers his work a success.

He is thankful for the hospital's continued work for diabetes education and the opportunity to connect with other individuals living with diabetes. It's been a rewarding experience, and he encourages individuals interested in volunteering to learn more about the program and available opportunities.

"I think we have a heck of a volunteer program, and I'm glad we have the people who do it because everyone does different things to help in their own way," he said.

To learn more about Columbus Community Hospital's diabetes education programs or volunteer opportunities, visit columbushosp.org.