



News Release

For Immediate Release:
Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Media Contact:
Grant Sunada
Media Liaison
Diabetes Prevention and Control Program
(o) 801-538-6896 (m) 801-660-9255

SL County Teen Leads Launch of ‘Faces of Diabetes’

Personal blog inspires campaign to share stories of diabetes

(SALT LAKE CITY) -- Although healthy herself, 13-year-old Genevieve (Gen) Ellis was so affected by her grandmother’s death from, and mother’s diagnosis of, diabetes, she started a blog to help all Utahns affected by the disease.

Today Gen, along with the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and other partners, announced the launch of a new statewide diabetes story-sharing campaign entitled ‘Faces of Diabetes’ as part of American Diabetes Month. This campaign aims to help people, families, businesses and communities share experiences with diabetes and support each other in the prevention of the disease and related complications.

When Gen and her mother first connected with the American Diabetes Association (ADA) and Salt Lake County’s diabetes community, they learned how to successfully make lifestyle changes to help prevent and control the disease. Gen has been sharing this success with others ever since. She even created the blog ‘Inspired by Diabetes’, (<http://inspiredbydiabetes.blogspot.com>) to encourage others to share their stories about how diabetes has impacted their lives and how healthy lifestyles choices are helping to minimize the effects of the disease.

“When my mom was diagnosed, all I knew about diabetes was that my Nana had died from complications of the disease,” Gen said. “I was scared, and knew that diabetes is a huge problem throughout our state, but hearing other people’s stories and sharing my own has helped both my mom and me deal with her diagnosis.”

Gen, a Girl Scout, continues to work closely with the ADA and the Girl Scouts of America to raise awareness of her cause. UDOH diabetes program employees were so impressed with her

-MORE-

work, they asked her to team up with the Utah Health Story Bank to create ‘Faces of Diabetes’ to show the personal side of this complex and burdensome disease.

The estimated cost (including medical costs and loss of productivity) of diabetes in Utah in 2006 was \$927 million. 2007 data show that about one in 15 Utahns has diabetes, 1,000 Utahns with diabetes die each year, and more than 20,000 hospital discharges a year list diabetes as primary or contributing cause for hospitalization.

But there is good news. Diabetes can often be prevented among the one in five Utahns who have pre-diabetes (Impaired Glucose Tolerance or Impaired Fasting Glucose), which means that blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes.

Preventing and controlling diabetes means fewer complications, an improved quality of life, and, ultimately, decreased costs.

“These stories are a great way to remember what is important about diabetes,” said Richard Bullough, PhD, Program Manager of the Diabetes Prevention and Control Program at the UDOH. “It impacts real people and their families, and as they share their ideas, struggles and successes, we believe we begin to slow the tide of diabetes.”

Public libraries have volunteered to help people view the ‘Faces of Diabetes’ site, contribute their own stories, and find accurate information about diabetes. For more information and resources for people affected by diabetes, call the UDOH Health Resource Line at 1-888-222-2542, visit <http://health.utah.gov/facesofdiabetes/>, or ask your local librarian.

###

The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.