

## LIVING WITH DIABETES

The morning of the 31<sup>st</sup> of August began with a chill in the air. By 10 am, the sun was shining and although the air was still icy, the mood was warm and cheerful. Gathered at the Spring Bonnet Picnic at Silverwood Manor were Moms of Children with Diabetes, a scene rich with colour and decorated with many beautifully created hats. The Moms were smiling and chatting as if they had been kept in silence for too long. We were honoured that three moms joined us all the way from Durban. The programme began with some singing by Lize van Dorsten and Gareth Murray who both have type 1 diabetes - Lize's brother Ruan and friend Etienne joined them. Lize performed a song she had written about diabetes:

### "All as one"

We'll do it all, everything, all as one  
We all need each other, we're sisters, brothers

If we stand here, if we all stand free  
Uniting for one cause, our love for diabetes

You don't quite know, you're not quite sure  
About those lows, those sugar highs, those ketone aches  
They're worth the fight

If we stand here, if we all stand free  
Uniting for one cause, our love for diabetes

Forget what they say, we'll manage it OUR way  
Your HbA1c does not define who you are  
You don't know when, confused with new insulin  
Just know that we're here to help you  
That won't change at all  
All that you are, all that you'll ever be, just manage your sugars  
There's still so much that you must see!

If we stand here, if we all stand free  
Uniting for one cause, our love for diabetes





# Spring Bonnet Picnic

By Hester Davel, Diabetes Nurse Educator, CDE  
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the kids for the weekend, I see them chatting, and chatting for that short time while we board the bus before leaving for Camp. There is worry and sadness in their eyes, as they wonder how their child will cope with being away. But, seeing their kids smiling and happy to go away with friends makes them know that it is the right thing.

The Mom's Picnic would not have been possible without my support team who believe in my vision and who help me, and also our Pharmaceutical Company partners that sponsored most of our day. A big 'shout out' goes to Abbott, Bayer, BD, FUTURELIFE®, HomeMed, LifeScan, Lilly, Medtronic, Novo Nordisk, Pick n Pay, Peppina, Roche and Sanofi who immediately said "Yes!" when they were asked to come - they were 100 % in support of this day. I also had great fun painting the moms goodie bags – these were filled with awesome handmade gifts and sponsored goods.

The Pharmaceutical company stalls were humming as the Moms had a look at all the latest products available to them. Others were filling in tickets to win some lovely prizes, organised by Cotti, Sarah, Riette and Charmaine.

Every mother there had a child with diabetes and understood the feelings and emotions that Lize and the band conveyed. The next song 'Hallelujah' made me wonder if I should get Kleenex to sponsor us next year...

This was our second picnic for mothers, and it was bigger than last year. The event was sparked by a thought I had one day of what can we give back to moms because they do so much for their children who have diabetes. I see them cry in my office. When we go camping with





Many were sipping champagne and orange juice to celebrate their coming together. It was awesome to see the moms unite, and share their stories with looks of compassion and understanding for each other. We saw the sharing of hugs and the wiping of tears, which were sometimes tears of happiness and sometimes tears of sadness.

Gareth Murray shared the story of his mother who had died and even though it is a sad story, diabetes never stood in his way. He is now doing what he always wanted to do - "working in the field of diabetes," knowing that insulin saves lives. I am proud to say that even though I am not his biological mom, I am still his mom. He did not grow in my tummy but in my heart. Being a Diabetes Educator does not make it easier for me. I feel the sadness, the fears and the hope for a cure one day that these mothers feel. Gareth has been my inspiration! Gareth's approach is that by accepting your diabetes you can live a happy and healthy life.

The mothers requested a theme of how to understand their children better. So, we found three speakers who gave information, inspiration and encouragement to the moms as they journeyed with their child (or children in some cases) and diabetes. Hendrien shared the understanding of the Five Love Languages in children, and I saw the moms nodding as they understood what this meant to them and their children. Novo Nordisk sponsored as gifts, copies of the book by Gary Chapman called "My child's love language" We gave these to the moms with the best bonnets of the day.



Rosemary gave guidelines on how to meet the needs of a maturing child. Bev shared a very inspiring and motivational story on how to follow your heart. She read the poem called "The story of my life" (author unknown). She left the moms with the thought that no matter how impossible everything may seem anything is possible, especially with support from others and a positive attitude.



As all became familiar with what was happening in other mom's lives, the realisation came that so many others shared the feelings of anxiety and sometimes depression. At the end of the day, I had another thought on how we can we make this journey easier on moms, dads and grandparents when their child has been diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Know that a number (a glucose reading) does not define your children, or if you are good or bad parents. It is merely a number that guides you to enable your children to reach for their dreams.



## What the day meant to some of the moms who attended...

**Rachel van Wyk** Hes, vir my was dit om te hoor dat ons moet laat gaan. My seun is 17 en 5 jaar 'n diabeet. Vir my is dit baie moeilik om te aanvaar dat hy na volgende jaar nie meer in my huis gaan wees nie. Rosemary het my opnuut laat besef dat ek as ouer my kind meer verantwoordings moet gee tov sy diabetes. O ja, en hy is eerste Dean van Wyk en dan 'n diabeet! Dan ook die ander mammas wat in dieselfde bootjie sit as ek, ek weet daar is baie, maar soms vergeet 'n mens van hulle en dink jou eie wereld is besig om in duie te stort. So vir my was dit 'n baie goeie leersame picnic! KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK!

**Lesley Mclean** I had a lovely time! Thanks to all! I heard a lot of what I can expect in the future for/with Ethan. Letting 'go' is definitely going to be difficult, not for him, but for me, his Ouma! Lol! They have to take responsibility some or other time I guess. Looking forward to the next picnic!!!!!! XXX

**Riette van der Westhuizen** For me it was just the opposite - I felt extremely guilty because I gave all the responsibility to JH. Now I don't feel so bad. I know I can send him away to college and know he will be OK.

**Ann Stewart** I didn't feel so alone - I felt part of a group of an incredible bunch of women who will do anything for their children. Everyone had their own story and could help and offer advice.

**Marguerita Winifred McLuckie** Like Ann, I felt that I wasn't alone in my everyday struggle to raise my little child with diabetes. We all go through the same emotional roller coasters and stress and most of us acknowledge that we all need help. This did make me feel better, because I felt a bit like a failure because of the breakdown I had earlier in the year...

I also learned that in all likelihood, Ethan is going to grow up to be a wonderful, responsible, successful young man, so I have renewed hope and a goal to work towards (besides just keeping him healthy).

**Maritza Rothmann** My experience was that we are never alone. Sometimes we might think why us? But, when you meet the moms you realize how blessed we are. We can share each other's pain, celebrate small victories and know that we only want the best for all our kids. We are a community of moms standing together making a difference each day in our lives as well as our kids. We must listen to the love language of each person in our family to understand them better and fill their cups with love each day. Lastly, if my son can be a role model like Gareth, we are surely blessed.

**Belinda Smith** Hi Hes, I thought the picnic was absolutely amazing. Just meeting the moms that we have on bbm chat... It was fantastic to meet so many moms that are in the same boat, so I know when I am having a bad day, I just share with everyone... The number one rule is never give up! Well done, all of you moms are an inspiration. Thank you for making my day so special xxxxxxxxx

**Riette van der Westhuizen** I am just sad I did not chat more to the moms. When I see their name and a comment I think, wow she was at the picnic we didn't chat. The day was much too short!

**Vicky Claire Critchlow** What I loved about the picnic is how strong all the moms are cause they are dealing with so much and we are always wanting to learn more and find out more for our children. I truly appreciate the effort all the ladies made for us moms to make sure we relaxed and enjoyed the day. It was truly wonderful.