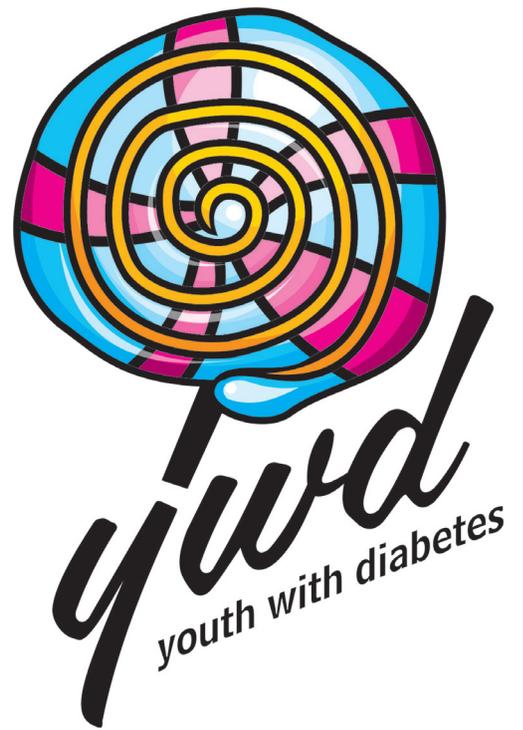


Youth With Diabetes Invests in the Future

By Hester Davel, Diabetes Educator,
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Writing this article and selecting the accompanying photos made me feel warm and fuzzy inside, and put a smile on my face. And, with good reason too...

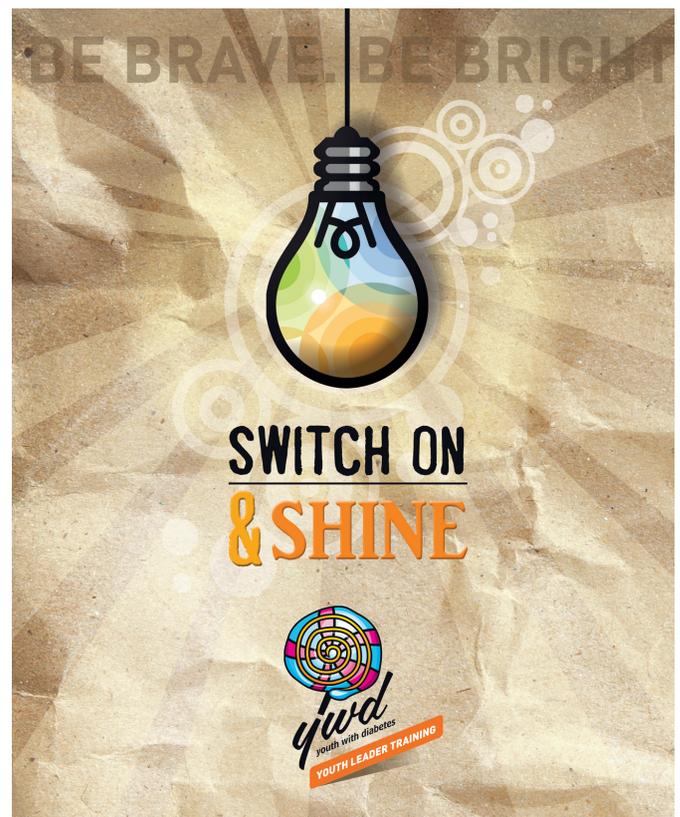


I am extremely proud of the courageous people I have met and worked with in the nine years since the establishment of *Youth With Diabetes* (YWD). Living with diabetes is not easy and through our motto 'life can be sweet', we aim to change lives through support, education and unconditional love.

Brave and Bright Youth Leaders

After our first YWD Camp, we realised that children with diabetes need their own role models, peer-to-peer training and the opportunity to share real experiences, feelings and knowledge about living with diabetes. From this early realisation, we started developing 'Diabetes Youth Leaders' and peer-to-peer relationships have become critical to the success of YWD.

Our first Youth Leader Training Camp focused on diabetes, but we soon realised that the Leaders also had other needs. They needed to understand *themselves* and the *needs of their peers* and they needed to *know how to give back to the YWD Community*. Early in 2014, YWD Managing Director Kerry Kalweit, Learning Solutions Specialist Hendrien van Zyl and I developed a programme to empower our Youth Leaders to change the lives of their peers. The theme of the Youth Leader training was SWITCH ON & SHINE.



We offered our awesome Youth Leaders the opportunity to discover their own potential - the inspiration behind the BE BRAVE BE BRIGHT slogan.

The first phase of this new leader training was offered from 10-14 July 2014 at Achterbergh Camp and Conference Centre in Krugersdorp. 46 Youth Leaders attended - 18 boys and 28 girls, aged between 14 and 25; from East London, George, Bloemfontein, Kimberley, Witbank, Secunda, Tembisa, Krugersdorp, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town, Namibia and Botswana.

We included the following topics in the training:

- Peer coaching skills
 - Who am I as a peer coach?
 - Coaching conversations
 - Challenging situations
- Diabetes
 - What is diabetes?
 - Insulin and testing
 - Nutrition and exercise
 - Hypoglycaemia and hyperglycaemia
 - Diabetic ketoacidosis and complications of uncontrolled diabetes
 - Life with diabetes

Music and art therapy assists personal healing, dealing with fear, pain and the impact of a life changing condition, such as diabetes, in a powerful way. The generous contributions and discounts offered by Herbert Evans Art Shop made daily art journaling sessions possible. Many Youth Leaders described these *personal reflection sessions* as a highlight of the Camp.

Meeting these youngsters and sharing their wisdom and life journeys and their pain and joy was a great honour. Every facilitator experienced this as a personal blessing. The Camp feedback forms reflect the impact and experience in the words of the Youth Leaders.



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Responses to the question, "What will you do differently as a direct result of what you have learned during this programme?" included:

In terms of managing their own diabetes

- I want to start testing more and doing accurate carb counting.
- I learnt a lot about complications, diets and exercise. I'm gonna try and keep my HbA1c between 6 and 7,5 % and exercise. I will definitely use the tools.
- I want to start taking my insulin, as I should, regardless of excuses.
- I will manage my blood glucose better; follow a correct diet and always count carbs.
- I will have a positive attitude towards my diabetes, set goals and work towards reaching my goals relentlessly.
- I am re-inspired and re-motivated to take control of my own diabetes. It feels so much easier with the support of my YWD family.

As member of YWD

- I will set an example to others. YWD is my family and I intend to take the time and effort to care and love the Organisation.
- I will represent YWD well. I will constantly think of new and innovative ways of creating awareness.
- I want to take a more demanding role in the organisation and support their growth and development in whatever way I can.

As a Youth Leader

- I will encourage and coach youth that struggle with their diabetes. I've learnt how to talk to people and coach them by just asking "who, what, when, where and how" so they'll open up more and think about their goals.
- I want to be a leader in my own life and a role model to any person, which I meet.



- I will keep pushing the YWD name; practice what I preach and be a role model.
- I have gained more confidence in approaching and speaking to / coaching other people with diabetes. I will be able to show leadership in any situation or issues in my community or school.
- I feel more confident in my ability to not only be a friend to other young people with diabetes, but also to be a role model and coach.

As a member of your local community

- I will work to raise awareness of diabetes and educate them what it's about. I can guide people how to eat healthily, and share the symptoms of diabetes and of the complications.

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- *I want to take what I have learnt and make myself available and approachable. I will look at creating awareness in schools around my area and educate parents about the aspects of having a child with diabetes.*
- *I am able to do things I couldn't before and I can offer more support.*

The variety of responses to the question 'What was the best part of the programme?' shows us how diverse the needs of these young people are:

- *I had the opportunity to reflect on my experiences with diabetes and as a member of YWD.*
- *I learned to do peer coaching.*
- *I enjoyed all the creative parts of the programme, such as the journals and reflection projects.*
- *Meeting other young people with diabetes; observing others managing their diabetes.*
- *I am learning to start and carry out an effective conversation with substance. I also enjoyed sharing stories with people from different backgrounds.*
- *Reflection was the best part that I really enjoyed because it shows how I am controlling my emotions.*
- *Learning about nutrition (and the food given at the camp was delicious).*
- *Learning about ketones.*
- *Sharing life stories with others, which made me realise that I am not the only who is going through a lot in life and the fact that if those people managed to deal with their challenge, I can do the same also.*
- *Learning how to make a conversation with someone and helping him or her choose the right way without using pressure or force.*

This Camp would not have been possible without sponsorship. Youth Leaders raised their own funds to come to the Training Camp - a whopping R 93, 000! Thank you to all the sponsors that supported individual leaders in their efforts to raise money.



We received the largest contribution from the National Lottery Distribution Fund. Our usual loyal sponsors included Novo Nordisk, Accu-Chek, iFora and Medtronic - each of these companies sponsored two Leaders, and FutureLife sponsored our snacks. In addition, a special thank you to Abbott for donating blood glucose meters and strips for the weekend. A 'high-five' to the CDE for sponsoring our T-shirts and for a monthly financial contribution from various CDE centres - who would think that R1 could make such a HUGE difference! (*Editor - 34 CDE branches have signed up to donate R1 per CDE Diabetes Management Programme patient towards YWD per month. These contributions help YWD to continue to make a difference in the lives of children and teens living with diabetes*).



Mother's 'Elegant Brunch'

'Behind every successful man there is a woman', but at YWD, we believe that behind every child living with diabetes there is a mother (carer) with unconditional love and devotion – giving everything she's got! With Gareth in my life, I personally experienced this - 24-7. You often feel alone, worried and fearful. When the Youth suggested an event for moms, I grabbed the opportunity with both hands. We have been putting our hearts and souls into every mom's event and 2014 was our third in Jo'Burg.

Burkleigh House was the perfect backdrop for this year's event, which had an 'Elegant Brunch' theme. The exquisite and visually stimulating





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surroundings reflected the beauty and care that moms bring to their families. Thank you to all who attended this fun and informative day. The mothers shared their love for their children with a photo shoot by José (Fonseca Photography). They also had the time to meet the representatives from LifeScan, Medtronic, Bayer, iFora, Abbott, Accu-Chek, Roche, Lilly and Novo-Nordisk, who helped to make this great event possible.



Looking at the YWD photos, I am sure you will agree that everybody involved in diabetes, from patient to family to health care team and the Pharma and Diagnostic companies should be rewarded with a sincere thank you! We love being part of this BIG Family. My personal and sincere thank you goes out to every individual and organisation whose kindness, support, time and financial contributions make it possible for YWD to uplift the communities we serve.



We will keep you posted on the YWD activities for 2015... Watch this space - There might be a few surprises coming to your part of the country!

Hester and the YWD Team

