

a Great Type of Support:

Group Lends a Hand To Families Dealing with Diabetes

By EMILY GUEVARA
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Margie Boyd remembers how quickly her life changed when her son Jake, then 8, was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes.

Within a day, carbohydrates, insulin levels, and giving regular injections became necessities every time Jake ate.

"It is a radical lifestyle change," Boyd says.

It was this experience and the work of learning how to cope with the disease that inspired Boyd and several other families affected by the disease to start an organization, the Tyler Type One Diabetes Foundation.

Tyler Type One exists to provide support and information to people and families affected by a recent diagnosis. From Facebook posts and daily phone calls to gift baskets and personal visits, the group provides a network for people affected by the disease.

Boyd said that she or other group members typically visit families within 24 to 48 hours of a diagnosis.

The organization has developed a partnership with Dr. Luis Casas, a pediatric endocrinologist, at Trinity Mother Frances Hospitals and Clinics so that he can refer new patients to the group.

Boyd said the influx of information that accompanies a new diagnosis can be overwhelming. The Type One members come by to offer emotional support. They provide baskets of snacks to treat sugar lows, but they stay away from offering medical advice, she said.



Photos by Kara Helm Photography

Sarah Wilson checks her 17-month-old daughter Faith's blood sugar levels.

In addition, the group meets once a month at a local church where a presentation is made about topics related to Type 1 diabetes. A Q&A session typically follows. Children living with diabetes are welcome to attend as well.

"The whole idea is to offer that undergirding support for the Type 1 community in this area," Boyd says.

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune

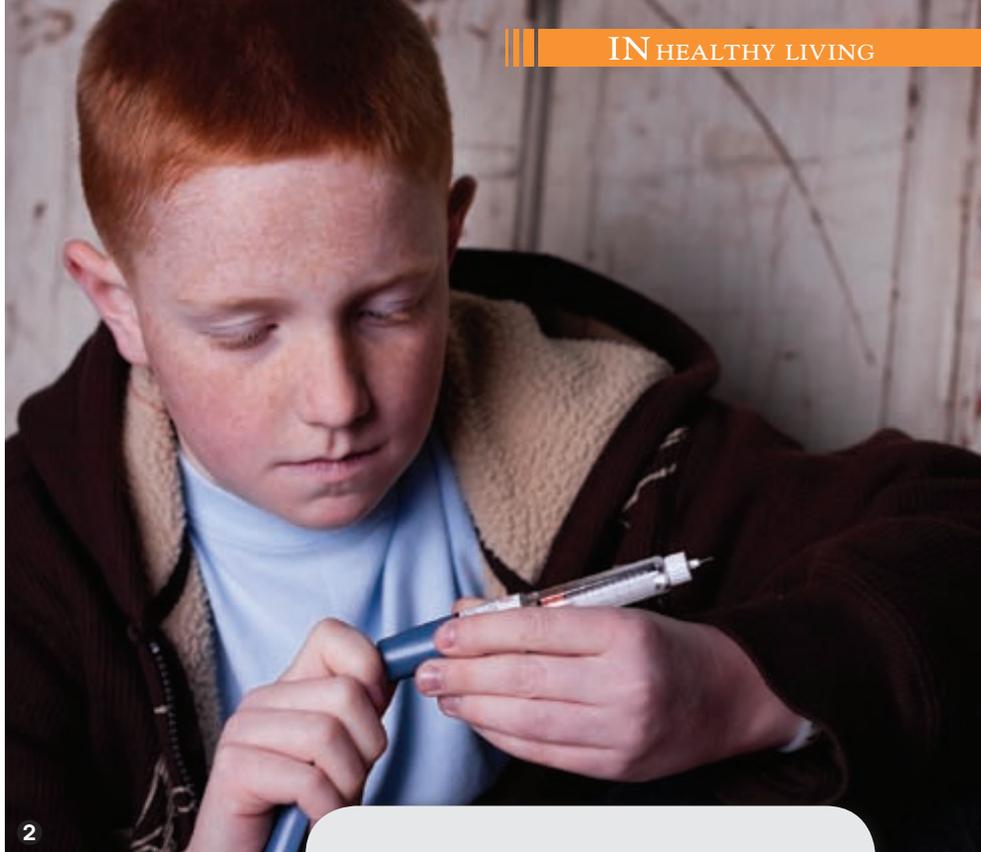
disease in which the body's immune system attacks and destroys the insulin-producing cells of the pancreas, according to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International website. It differs from Type 2 diabetes, which is a metabolic disorder in which a person's body produces insulin but cannot use it effectively, the website reads.

The body needs insulin, a hormone, to convert sugar, starches and other food into



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¹ Faith Wilson sports her medical identification bracelet indicating she has Type 1 diabetes.



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² Jake Boyd prepares to give himself an insulin injection.

energy, according to the American Diabetes Association website.

Without this insulin or the body's proper use of it, controlling blood glucose levels becomes a constant battle for the diabetic.

It is this battle which Tyler Type One hopes to make a bit more bearable.

As many as three million Americans may have Type 1 diabetes. And each year, more than 15,000 children or approximately 40 per day, are diagnosed in the U.S., according to the research foundation website.

Dr. Casas, the area's only pediatric endocrinologist, told The Tyler Courier-Times-Telegraph in February that he treats more than 200 East Texas children who have the disease.

Faith Wilson is one of these. The 17-month-old was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at 9 months, unusually young for a child diagnosis.

Her mother Sarah Wilson says the Tyler Type One organization has been invaluable to her family's journey with this disease.

It was members of this group who

came and visited her and prayed with her when she sat in the hospital with her daughter after the diagnosis. It is also these friends who have offered advice and encouragement over the last few months.

"Honestly, there hasn't been a day ... that I haven't had contact with one of them either on the phone, texting or Facebook," Wilson says. "It's been huge for us."

Boyd says the impact of their organization should grow this fall. Starting the first week in August, the group will offer educational classes for grandparents, care givers or anyone else who would like to or need to know more about the disease.

Boyd says it can be downright dangerous for family members or childcare workers to take care of children with this disease if they don't know how to handle it. The more education the group can provide the better.

"It really provides a strong support system for the family," she says. 



The Ranch Rodeo and Concert

The Tyler Type 1 Diabetes Foundation will have its first large-scale fundraiser at 10 a.m. Oct. 30.

The Ranch Rodeo and Concert will take place at the Texas Rose Horse Park nine miles from Loop 323 on Texas State Highway 110 North.

Events include wild cow milking, sorting, doctoring and mugging. Dummy roping for kids, pony cart rides, and a Wild West show also will be available.

The concert features the Internet singing sensation Daves Highway out of Mississippi.

The group is made up of 12-, 14-, and 15-year-old siblings, who sing three-part harmony performing both country and gospel music.

The Children's Miracle Network is presenting the event and the Cross Brand Cowboy Church, along with several other cowboy churches, is putting on the rodeo.

Visit <http://www.tylertypeone.org/> or the organization's Facebook page for more information.