



July 2017



## Dear Family and Friends,

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, the first Children with Diabetes® gathering was held... quite by accident. That was in early June 2000 and just happened to coincide (or conflict, depending on one's perspective) with the annual American Diabetes Association conference.

The following year, we held an event in July that was more conference-like in nature. It had real speakers, sessions, an exhibit hall, and a small youth program loosely divided into 'under 13s' and 'teens.' Our conference was primarily held in Coronado H, and the printed program was 20 pages long, Xeroxed and spiral-bound by my local Kinkos. Topics about complications and rudimentary carb-counting featured prominently. We sent the teens – ALL the teens – along with two volunteers on a couple of buses to Epcot on Friday night. The teens all came back; the volunteers never did.

We didn't have green, orange, or yellow wristbands. We didn't have carb counts on the buffet tables. We didn't have – or really even know about – gluten free food. ★

Right after that conference, my then-13-year-old daughter, Carolyn, said, "You know, Mom, this conference is about more than just kids with diabetes. It's about their brothers and sisters and friends, too." I asked her if she would like to develop some ideas for next year with a very dear friend, Dr. Richard Rubin. And the **Siblings Program** was born.

At about the same time, Jeff's then-13-year-old daughter, Marissa, said, "You know, Dad, these aren't just friends. They're more like friends for life." And **Friends for Life** was born. ★

Soon after, we decided that "it's really good to know who has type 1 at a diabetes conference" and "it would be so helpful to know the carb counts of the food we serve and to know if anyone has food allergies." And the **green, orange, and yellow wristbands** made their first appearance. As did **carb counts and portion sizes** on our buffet tables.

In 2003, a small handful of grandparents proposed the idea that maybe if we had a few activities specifically for grandparents – perhaps a coffee hour and a session or two - they would begin to feel more comfortable around their grandkids. They might feel ok doing things like sleepovers. And the **Grandparents Program** was added.

You get my drift? Every year, by our own experience and by your feedback, we learn about things we could be doing better and new things we might be trying. Please share your thoughts with us! Everything begins with someone's good idea.

Whether you are an attendee, a sponsor, an exhibitor, staff, or faculty, I thank you so very much for being part of this most special week.

## Friends for Life,



Laura Billetdeaux

Vice President, Education and Programs  
**Children with Diabetes**  
[laurab@childrenwithdiabetes.com](mailto:laurab@childrenwithdiabetes.com)

