



July 2019

Dear Family and Friends, ★

Welcome to the 20th Anniversary of Friends for Life Orlando!

Wow, twenty years. ★

Let's see... in 1999, Sam had been diagnosed with type 1 for less than a year. He was 9 years old, Carolyn was 12, Neal and I were 40. I had ventured into this new realm called the Internet, and had found the Children with Diabetes community. Sonia Cooper, Ellen Ullman, and Lauren Lanning were my first CWD mom friends, and Jeff and Brenda Hitchcock were my idols. They knew everything. My new lifelines were all those moms and dads who answered my first post on the Friends listserv, when I simply typed: I am so scared. Every single person wrote the same response: You are going to be okay. ★

Isn't that what everyone needs to hear on their first night home from the hospital? It was the only thing that sank into my tired, scared brain. All of those moms and dads who helped me that night became my Friends for Life, my FFLs, although that term didn't yet exist.

As a parent, I grew up with CWD and Friends for Life. I was a young parent when Sam was diagnosed. Now, I'm... old. My kids are adults now. I'm thinking about retirement (and that new camper!).

And it seems to me that we have turned a very significant corner.

In late April, Debra posted in the FFL Orlando Facebook group: *Hello, I am a type 1 diabetic adult. I was diagnosed at age 10 in 1973. I have never attended FFL, but I am wondering if this might be appropriate for me. Am I too old?*

Richard responded: *I am 79 and diagnosed in 1945 at age 6. I'll be there.*

Nancy responded, too: *I'm in my 50s (diagnosed at age 4 in the 1960s) and this is the best T1D event out there; I wouldn't miss it for the world! In fact, even if they found a cure, I'd come back for "former T1D" reunions!* ★

Cora replied: *The conference for us 'old timers' is fantastic (dxd 1966). Tons of amazing information and support and views of things to come.*

Sean summed it up: *Come meet your tribe. You're never too old!*

This is what we – the FFL tribe – have built together. The orange and green bands – an international community for people of all ages. We used to be Children with Diabetes. Now we are oh so much more.

Thanks for spending this week with us.

Friends for life, ★



Laura Billetdeaux

Vice President, Education and Programs
Children with Diabetes
laurab@childrenwithdiabetes.com