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FPMS: More Than Just Scholarships

by Terence D. McDonald, DPM

One of the biggest challenges the Florida Podiatric Medical Society (FPMS) has faced is how to create a large Podiatric imprint here in Florida. Historically, the Society has been very successful in touching the lives of graduating students of podiatry schools and lately, with the Kopelman Scholarship, touching the lives of Sophomore students as well.

FPMS provides non-podiatric scholarships in addition to podiatric student scholarships. One of the first non-student funds the Society created was a scholarship for diabetic children. This scholarship provides funding for a Florida child with diabetes to attend one of the Florida Diabetes Camps. These camps allow a child, who would otherwise be limited to attending one of a few available day camps willing to take on a child with his or her unique medical issues, to attend a sleepaway camp. Not only does this experience allow them to enjoy many of the same pleasures so many of us treasure from our own childhoods, it allows these kids to meet and befriend other kids who have the same problems, concerns, and issues that they have. For some of these kids, it is the first time they have met another peer who has diabetes. Speaking as a parent who has two diabetic children, these camps allow parents to sleep comfortably at night, knowing that their child is well-cared-for and supervised while at camp. Sometimes participating in activities is just not worth the hassle, when parents of diabetic children have to explain how an insulin pump works or ask the supervising adults to remind their child to check their blood sugar, or experience the look you get when you try to explain your child's needs. Some of these adults are probably thinking, "I already have a lot of things to deal with, and now I have to care for a sick kid?" You never feel good walking away from this type of situation.

Recently, the Society expanded its reach to the general population by awarding a grant to the Judeo-Christian Medical Clinic near Tampa, Florida. This clinic serves the indigent population there. **Dr. Marty Port**, the founding President of the Society, provides much-needed indigent foot and ankle care. Dr. Port's grant has been used to purchase braces for needy children suffering from pediatric deformities, which are best treated with orthotics and prosthetics. This vital care alleviates the need for surgical intervention and prevents the damage that results when these deformities go untreated.

Your Society is reaching out, not only to the Podiatric community, but also to Florida's citizens. If the Society grows, so will its impact. But that is up to you! So far, donations to the Society have been used to support these programs. If we wish to grow and expand our reach, we need our membership to step up. So many of you have been successful Podiatrists and your accomplishments are to be applauded. Giving to the Society will not only share in the success you have gained, it will solidify your accomplishments long after you finish practicing. Please consider making a gift to the Society. And if you have any suggestions for additional grants, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at flamcdon@cs.com.

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