

Taking Summer Fun for Granted



By Terence D. McDonald, DPM

I imagine many of you have memories of growing up and what summer meant to you as a child. For me, when the school bell rang for the last time of the academic year, it meant long, lazy days of sleeping in, playing baseball, and hanging out with my buddies until the sun went down and our mothers called us in for dinner. It also meant participating in some type of summer camp. Growing up, I spent many summers at sleep away camp, day camp or the town pool taking swimming lessons. I am still in contact with childhood friends I made during those summers. I grew up in a small New Jersey town where there were tons of programs I could get involved with, or I could simply wander the streets on my bicycle, riding from one friend's house to another. All day long, my mother never had to worry where I was or if I was in danger.

Today, we live in very different times. As a parent, I know all too well the anxiety of planning summers for my kids. Cindy and I, like many of you, both have full-time jobs, and around this time every year, we would begin the process of planning summer activities for our three children. It was always stressful trying to find camps that would be enriching for our children, as well as appealing to each of their special desires or skills. Honestly, it was more difficult than running my office calendar.

Now imagine that one (or in my case, two) of your children is diabetic. Many day camps will not accept a child who needs to check their blood sugar two to three times a day, or who could possibly pass out in the middle of an activity. Many camps we looked at did not have a nurse, let alone a medical facility to handle a child who may need special care. It broke our hearts every time one of our diabetic children came home and told us their friends were all attending a great camp they heard about and wanted to know if they could go as well. Many times, the answer would be "no."

So we were excited when we heard about Diabetes Camp, a place where children could go and participate in all the fun things their friends did. A place where you, as a parent, didn't have to worry, knowing that the camp had medical staff available to help your child

should they need it. We are so grateful our children got to spend at least some of their summers attending and enjoying camp. Diabetes Camp introduced them to other kids their age who also had to check their blood sugar every day or eat crappy sugar-free pudding or cookies when they went to birthday parties. Our children learned about glucose control and traded tips on foods that are on the "OK" list and actually taste good. They also learned how to explain what an insulin pump was to their friends or why sticking their fingers wasn't gross. The value of Diabetes Camp to our family was priceless.

Now imagine the heartbreak the parent of a diabetic child must feel when they simply can't afford to send their child to an amazing camp where they feel like "a regular kid."

The Florida Podiatric Medical Society (FPMS), through generous support from you, has sponsored three scholarships to the Florida Diabetes Camp, allowing children to attend a camp meant just for them. This year, we would like to expand our scholarship program and offer three additional scholarships for Camp Gene. Camp Gene is a one-week day camp for diabetic children, which is sponsored and run by the South Florida American Diabetes Camp. It will take place in Boca Raton at the Levis Jewish Community Center from July 9-13.

If you would like to sponsor a child to attend either the Florida Diabetes Camp or Camp Gene, please let me know, and I will be happy to provide you with information on how to do so. If you know a family who you think would benefit from sending their child to one of these wonderful camps, I would be happy to provide you with their contact information. And if you just like the idea that your profession is providing gifts like these to the community, then I encourage you to donate to the Florida Podiatric Medical Society every year when you pay your dues.

Finally, I encourage all of you to remember the wonderful times we spent as kids during the summer and spend some time this summer relaxing a little and enjoying your own family.



Camp Gene

What: A one-week day camp for diabetic children

Who: Sponsored and run by the South Florida American Diabetes Camp

Where: Boca Raton Levis Jewish Community Center

When: July 9-13