

## COMMUNITY

# Family determined to raise \$12,000 for diabetes research



Derek Dunn photo

Kendra's charity marathon run in Hawaii.

"I've never done fundraising and I've never exercised," Kendra said. "So all of this is new to me, but I'm having a great time so far."

So, why didn't Kendra just cut her losses and leave Johnson the very day he informed her? Diabetes can be hereditary, and now that they have two young daugh-

ters, will one of them turn diabetic? How are they going to cope if Johnson's disease cuts into his time even more, as can happen with some treatments? What if he needs a kidney transplant? What if even surgery itself doesn't stop the disease's progression?

"Hey, you can't pick who you fall in love with," Kendra said. "He's amazing and I love him. That's all."

## Family Fun Fair this weekend

A Family Fun Fair will be held on Sunday, May 21, from 12 to 4 p.m. at Rosetta Park, (31 Rosetta) near Havenlea just off Prince of Wales.

The fair has been organized by the John family as part of an awareness and fundraising effort for the Canadian Diabetes Association.

Events at the Family Fun Fair will include games for the whole family, inflatable jumping castles, a 22' Super Slide, Pony Rides, free face painting and helium balloons, with a barbecue and prizes.

For more information on this event don't hesitate to email [K\\_and\\_J\\_Team\\_Diabetes@yahoo.com](mailto:K_and_J_Team_Diabetes@yahoo.com).

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BY DEREK DUNN

Back in the early 1990s, after only three months together, Johnson John knew things were getting pretty serious between himself and Kendra. She was a valley girl, bubbly and beautiful, with a sparkle in her eye. He was into body-building, in dapper clothes with a sparkle in his eye. He knew it was time to tell her.

She had a right to know.

"We were dating for about three months when he sat me down to say something," Kendra recalls. "I had no idea what he was going to tell me."

It couldn't be health related, unless he suffered from mental illness, because Johnson was in peak physical condition. He looked normal and healthy, almost too healthy. She once saw syringes in his fridge; maybe he was on steroids.

"He then proceeded to confess — like it was some deep dark secret — that he had diabetes, and had been on insulin for many years," she said. "When I asked why it took him so long to tell me, he basically said he was concerned that once I found out, I may not want to be with him anymore."

One in 10 Canadians is affected by diabetes. Johnson is that one, having been first diagnosed when he was just 16.

"It wasn't easy. It wasn't," he said. "I had three brothers who were fine and here I was tired all the time. But don't get me wrong. I've got big enough shoulders to handle it, but I definitely wouldn't wish this on anybody."

For 23 years now, Johnson has injected himself with insulin twice a day, sometimes three times a day. He tests his blood sugars by pricking his fingers several times a day. Insulin prolongs his life, and without it Johnson would be dead. However, insulin is not just his best friend in the fight with diabetes, it's one of his worst enemies; the general public, even friends and family, can't see that Johnson's kidney is working

at 12 per cent capacity. They can't observe the dire severity of his situation, one that will likely reach the point of a kidney transplant, provided he finds a donor. To look at Johnson is to see a perfectly healthy person. They sometimes believe, erroneously, that insulin has cured him. Which is why funding is difficult to acquire, even though Canada is home to many of the breakthroughs in diabetes research, going back as far as insulin-developers Frederick Banting and Charles Best.

"That's why Kendra and I have decided to put on these events for the public," Johnson said. "We want to raise awareness, to let people know that insulin is not a cure. And to raise the \$12,000 we need for the Canadian Diabetes Association."

The Johns are holding a Family Fun Fair on Sunday, May 21, from 12 to 4 p.m. at Rosetta Park, near Havenlea just off Prince of Wales.

"We would like to invite our neighbours and surrounding community to join us in Rosetta Park, for games, inflatable jumping castles, 22' Super Slide, Pony Rides, free face painting and helium balloons, a barbecue, and prizes," Kendra said. "We are hoping this event is a success and that our park is filled with children and their parents enjoying a great day together."

They are also organizing a volleyball challenge, a wine-and-cheese event, and a wine tasting event.

"I'm really surprised to see how well we are doing," Kendra said. "I've never done this sort of thing before, but to see people giving so much — and it's not always the ones you'd expect to give very much — but it brings tears to my eyes."

Often it is the least fortunate who give to the less fortunate, Kendra has learned.

The \$12,000 goes directly to the association, which in turn funds Johnson and