

Barrhaven couple hard at work for a cure for diabetes

MARGARET SAMBOL
BARRHAVEN WEEKENDER

When Barrhaven resident Johnson John was 16 years old, he was diagnosed with diabetes and while still in the hospital, handed an orange to learn how to use a syringe. Twenty-three years later, the needles are still a daily routine in the life-and-death balancing act of blood sugar and insulin that Johnson faces as a diabetic.

Type one diabetes occurs when the pancreas cannot produce insulin, the hormone that allows the body to absorb sugars for energy. Type two diabetes occurs when the pancreas cannot

produce enough insulin or the body can not use the insulin effectively.

But the insulin injections and finger pricks are mild compared to the other possible complications Johnson faces, including heart disease, kidney disease, eye disease and nerve damage.

JOHNSON'S HEALTH

Johnson's diagnosis as a diabetic came as a surprise to the healthy, active teenager. Suddenly, he found himself thirsty and tired and was often falling asleep in school.

"I thought I was fighting a bug," Johnson says.

He began losing weight

and he wet the bed. At first he hid it from his mother, but when it happened again, he knew something was seriously wrong.

He went to see his doctor and was told he had symptoms of diabetes. Then he spent the next 10 days in the hospital to re-balance his sugar levels. He was still in a hospital bed when he was told he would have to inject himself with insulin for the rest of his life.

"Twenty-three years later, I'm still doing the same thing," Johnson says.

If Johnson's sugar levels get too low, he can become disoriented and confused, or in extreme cases, he can

slip into unconsciousness. If his levels get too high, he will be tired and thirsty.

His two young daughters have had to learn how to recognize these symptoms and know how to call 9-1-1.

Although Johnson learned to manage his diabetes, his health was threatened by an untreated condition, high blood pressure, as an adult.

His family doctor passed away at the young age of 44 and Johnson was unable to find another doctor for two years. During that time, his high blood pressure went undiagnosed and untreated.

His wife, Kendra John, begged her doctor to take Johnson as a patient so he could have his prescriptions renewed. Although her doctor couldn't take Johnson, she was able to connect Johnson to another doctor.

The couple was in for a shock.

The doctor explained that Johnson's untreated high blood pressure had damaged his kidneys and his eyes. His kidneys were operating at about 20 per cent and he required laser eye surgery to avoid blindness.

Johnson underwent sur-

gery to have a catheter installed in his stomach, to prepare for the dialysis he was expected to need any day. Miraculously, dialysis

had been postponed time and time again.

DIABETES,
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Fun Day for diabetes research rescheduled to Friday

WEEKENDER STAFF

After rain forced the first attempt a "Family Fun Fair" fundraiser for diabetes to be postponed, the Barrhaven couple of Johnson and Kendra John have re-scheduled for this Friday (June 16) with a rain date of June 23.

The fun day will be held in Rosetta Park (31 Rosetta Dr.) in Barrhaven from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The fair will feature a lot of fun activities for children including bouncing castles and slides, pony rides and games. There will also be a barbecue.

All the funds raised will be donated to the Canadian Diabetes Association.

For more information on the fun fair visit <http://helpteamdiabetes.com>.

UPCOMING

The Johns have a number of fundraising events planned for this summer including a "Wine and Dine for Diabetes" on July 11 at the Tratoria Café Italia on Preston Street. The \$75 ticket includes a four-course meal with wine, followed by a silent auction.

On Aug. 15, they are planning a wine-tasting event at La Roma Restaurant, which will also include a silent auction.

This summer, Kendra is hoping to organize a sneak peek of a children's movie.

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