

## DIABETES AWARENESS IS A FULL-TIME JOB

Lions are well aware that diabetes is a chronic disease that we cannot take lightly, that its prevalence is worldwide and epidemic in nature. As Lions, we should concern ourselves that this illness of millions is both genetic and environmental in origin. Of concern also, is that too many of us are reactive rather than proactive about its prevention or its management over time. This begets a constant wake-up call to all of us that the more we learn and know about diabetes...Type-1, Type-2, or Gestational...the better we are for ourselves, our families, our friends, and our local communities. Diabetes awareness remains a critical and important initiative of every Lions Club if we are to have a long-term, positive impact on the prevention and control of this debilitating chronic disease.

How consuming is the prevalence of diabetes in the United States? Note that 25.8 million children and adults (8.3% of the population) have diabetes. This includes the 18.8 million people who have already been diagnosed, as well as the 7.0 million who are undiagnosed cases at this time. It is also unfortunate that another 79 million people presently live with pre-diabetes conditions that eventually lead to the disease in its chronic state. We will end up seeing 1.9 million new cases annually that are diagnosed among the 20-year and older population. Yes, these are staggering statistics, but even more concerning is that one in 400 children and adolescents has been diagnosed with this chronic condition that shows little preference for age or gender.

Lions are also well aware that diabetes and eye disease are directly correlated. Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness among adults aged 20-74 years. Statistics indicate that 4.2 million people with diabetes aged 40 years and older have diabetic retinopathy, with 0.7 million of those individuals being in the advanced state of retinopathy that leads to severe vision loss and blindness. Although diabetic eye disease and blindness continue to be our focus as Lions, we must be reminded that diabetes does not preclude other primary health complications and their associated costs...such as heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, renal/pancreatic failure, neuropathy and amputation.

Lions must continue to step forward and be a driving force in their communities to further educate individuals about diabetes...its prevention, symptoms, control, management, and the personal health consequences and economic impact if our choice is one of neglect. What has your club done to bring diabetes awareness to the forefront in your community? Please give this question more thought as you plan your community initiatives for the remainder of this year and the next. Diabetes awareness is our obligation and a commitment to our full-time effort to make a difference.

District 14-N Diabetes Awareness Chairperson