



Dear Fellow Oklahomans,

Hi, my name is Megan Koleber. I'm 13 years old and live with my family in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes (type I) a month before my third birthday. Since being diagnosed, I have taken 11,310 insulin shots (three per day) and twice as many finger sticks to check my blood sugar.

My family and I have always financially supported the American Diabetes Association and became actively involved with the ADA last November. My mom showed me a petition out of *Diabetes Forecast* magazine, and we were shocked to learn that diabetes is not a national priority! Yet diabetes kills more Americans each year than breast cancer and AIDS combined. Diabetes cost America an estimated \$98 billion last year in lost work time and medical costs.

I have come to realize that there are many things we can do to correct this problem. By participating in a fundraising event like the *America's Walk for Diabetes*, of which I am honorary co-chair, you can help raise money for research, education and advocacy. If you write or e-mail your representative and senators, they will hear our message for change. Or join us at our state or nation's capital next year as a delegate for diabetes. Your actions will get results. My family and I have done all of these things, and we challenge you to get a partner and walk with us at 1 p.m. on Sunday, September 20 at Utica Square. **Together we can make a difference.**

Do actions work? After collecting almost 2,000 petition signatures, my family and I were off to Washington, DC, in March to rally for a cure. Again, I was surprised that out of 16 million people who have diabetes in the U.S., only a handful of people came to show their support. My family and I were the only delegates from Oklahoma.

It was so exciting not only to see our beautiful nation's capital, but to meet some of our leaders as well. Friends "on the hill" included Representative George Nethercutt of Washington state and Oklahoma Representative Ernest Istook. We also met with a member of Oklahoma Representative Steve Largent's office. The highlight of our trip was sitting in a House Appropriations Committee hearing at which Dr. Harold Varmus, director of the National Institutes of Health, was present. The subcommittee on health helps decide which diseases receive the most funding.

Since returning home, my family and I have met with Senator Billy Mickle, majority leader at our state capital. He introduced a resolution to encourage public awareness of diabetes and proclaimed March 24 "American Diabetes Alert Day" in Oklahoma.

In June, I attended the 58th annual ADA meeting in Chicago and met with volunteers and researchers from across the country who are committed to finding a cure for diabetes. We are very fortunate to have Jane Camporeale, a very committed long-time volunteer from Tulsa, as chair of the ADA this year.

I, along with more than 195,000 Oklahomans with diabetes, thank you for taking the time to read my letter and deciding to help find a cure for diabetes by getting sponsor pledges and joining us at the *America's Walk for Diabetes* on September 20. Only 4 percent of Americans think diabetes is a serious disease. The complications can be deadly, and the word needs to get out - will you help? I know you will.

Sincerely,

Megan Koleber