

Jenks student becomes advocate for diabetes

By **JESSICA NEAL**

World Staff Writer

Megan Koleber loves her cat, enjoys playing the piano, collects Beanie Babies and is learning jazz dance. She says she's just a normal kid.

But throughout the 13-year-old's day she is reminded that she is different. Four times a day Megan must check her blood sugar and give herself insulin injections three times a day. Megan is diabetic.

It's a heavy load for a new teenager, but she seems to take it all in stride.

In addition Megan has become Oklahoma's newest advocate, speaking out at school, luncheons and meetings about the need for financial support to help find a cure for diabetes.

"My pet peeve is when people say, 'You don't look like you have diabetes,'" Megan said. "Well, what is someone with diabetes supposed to look like?"

The South Tulsa teen was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes just a

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month shy of her third birthday. Since then she has taken more than 11,310 insulin shots and twice as many finger sticks to keep the disease under control.

Recently Megan, who attends Jenks East Middle School, learned of the lack of funding for research about diabetes.

"I found out more people die from diabetes every year than AIDS and cancer combined," Megan said.

About 16 million people a year die from diabetes while AIDS and all cancer deaths number eight million, according to information from the American Diabetes Association (ADA). Yet for every \$7 of funding for AIDS

and breast cancer, there is only \$1 spent on diabetes, Megan's mother, Kim, said.

"AIDS and cancer are just as important," Kim said. "We're just saying diabetes needs its fair share."

After discovering that diabetes was not considered a national priority for funding, Megan took some action. She asked friends and family to sign petitions from the ADA in support of increased funding for diabetes. After gathering 1,927 signatures, the second most collected in the country, Megan sent them off along with a letter to President Bill Clinton in Washington, D.C.

Megan and her family later went to Washington, D.C., for a Rally for the Cure event. The rally brought a handful of supporters. The Koleber family were the only delegates to attend from Oklahoma. The family met with representatives in Congress to urge them to vote for more funding for research on diabetes.

Megan received an Advocacy Achievement Award from the ADA at See **Advocate** on South 2



Community World staff photo by Jessica Neal

Megan Koleber plays with her cat, Samuel. Megan, who calls herself a "regular kid," recently has become an advocate for people with diabetes.

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the event for her work in making others aware of the disease. She also made her debut as a star. Megan is featured in a national public service video that tells

how the disease affects her and how others can help.

Her latest project will let Green Country residents get involved with the fight

for a cure for diabetes.

The eighth grader is the honorary co-chair for the upcoming America's Walk for Diabetes. Megan will walk with about 100 classmates and many more Oklahomans to raise money for and awareness of diabetes.

She has set a personal goal to raise \$1,000 for the event.

The annual walk will begin at Utica Square in Midtown Tulsa on Sept. 20. Registration opens at 1 p.m. with the walk beginning at 2 p.m. Walkers may choose a two- or five-mile route.

All proceeds from the walk will fund research projects, patient advocacy initiatives and education programs.

Immediately following the walk, participants can take part in a free health fair. At 6 p.m. walkers will be treated to a Concert for the Stars, a two-hour show featuring pianist and humorist Peter Simon.


Also, Megan will be collecting more signatures at the event for her next trip to Washington, D.C., for another Rally for a Cure event in the spring.

For more information or to register for the walk, call (800) 254-WALK or 492-3839.

Megan has offered to speak and show her video to those interested in helping raise money for the event. To contact Megan, e-mail her at mkole45379@aol.com.


Community Quotes

With all the bad news this summer, what has been the best thing that has happened?



"The best thing that has happened has been Clinton admitting his guilt. Just because he's president doesn't mean he should get away with it."

Kregg Tyler, sales manager



"My oldest daughter got married and we bought a fishing cabin in New Mexico."

Renee Drake, office manager