Strawberry boy is going the distance

Ambitious 9-year-old Peyton Brock is ambassador in S.F. diabetes walk

By MICHELLE ASCHWALD | maschwald@thearknewspaper.com

AFTER NAVIGATING his skateboard through the schoolyard at Bel Aire Elementary, spunky Peyton Brock, 9, plopped down to rest. The Strawberry resident has a zest for life, but has to closely monitor his blood sugar level several times a day.

Peyton has type 1 diabetes—a life-threatening autoimmune disease that was first diagnosed when he was 18 months old.

Today, he is indistinguishable from other fourth-graders who maintain a regular schedule of school and activities because he has learned to manage his disorder. And he optimistically believes he can do anything and go anywhere—“Just like other boys, I like to ride cycles, go-carts, ATVs, surfing, hiking, sailing, skateboarding—lots of outdoor action,” Peyton says.

On Oct. 27, Peyton will serve as an

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‘Kiddical Mass’: Tiburon kicks off bike train in traffic-solution effort

By DEBORRE MCCROHAN
dmccrohan@thearknewspaper.com

The first-ever Tiburon Bike Train between downtown novices and Bel Aire Elementary School made tracks Oct. 9, leaving its first station in front of San Francisco Yacht Club at 7:15 a.m. and rolling its way down Beach Road to Old Rail Trail and on to its final destination.

As conductors Frances Barbour and Kathy McLeod, both certified bicycle instructors, arrived at each station along Beach Road, Tiburon Boulevard, Old Rail Trail, Greenalwood Beach Road and Blackfield Drive, they blew the train whistle to signal that young cyclists should join the procession. It’s the conductors’ job—and the job of parent volunteers—they’re hoping to recruit—to escort the young cyclists along the route and to render assistance as needed.

“I thought it went awesome,” McLeod said. She reported that 93 Bel Aire and 102 Del Mar students participated.

She said one mom was so determined to let her child miss it she arrived at the yacht club station on her bicycle with her wet hair still in a towel.

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Supervisors will review impact of Tiburon Ridge development

By DEBORRE MCCROHAN
dmccrohan@thearknewspaper.com

The Marin Board of Supervisors is set to hold its first hearing Oct. 22 on the final environmental impact report for the Martha Company’s proposed 430-unit subdivision at the intersection of Old Rail Trail and Lagoon Avenue.

At the meeting, the board is expected to decide whether to certify that the final EIR completely and adequately identifies the environmental impacts of the project. No decision has been set for a hearing on the merits of the project itself.

The Martha property, as the 110-acre parcel is known locally, straddles the northwestern tip of the Tiburon Peninsula, the Easton Point subdivision.
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ambassador for Walk to Cure Diabetes at Port Mason in San Francisco. The 3-mile walk fundraiser benefits the Bay Area chapter of JDRF, formerly known as the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, the largest non-governmental funder of type 1 diabetes research. The role of walk ambassadors is to help educate the community about the condition.

"It is cool to be an ambassador," Peyton says. "I can teach others about what it is like to live with diabetes."

**Diabetic onset**

Type 1 diabetes can manifest at any age, but most often appears during childhood or adolescence. It occurs when the body's immune system attacks and destroys the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas called beta cells, causing the pancreas to stop producing insulin, a hormone that enables a person to get energy from food. When there is not enough insulin, instead of going into the cells, glucose builds up in the bloodstream, and the body can't use it for energy, thus leading to the symptoms of type 1 diabetes.

The causes are not understood, although scientists believe that both genetic factors and environmental triggers are involved. Neither diet nor lifestyle affects the onset of type 1 diabetes. There is no prevention and no screening presently for people without symptoms.

One does not grow out of the disease — and until a cure is found, it lasts a lifetime.

Peyton’s mom, Shelby Brock, says there are no other known diabetics in her immediate or extended family.

"My husband, Tracy, and I were totally shocked and upset when we learned that Peyton had diabetes so young," she says.

"The day we realized something was wrong with him, it was very hot outside. Peyton kept drinking water from his sippy cup, and I thought his thirst was excessive after consuming a few dinners. Then, I took him to the doctor who could smell the sweetness on Peyton’s breath — the doctor told us to rush to the emergency room.”

The emergency room staff immediately gave Peyton insulin to bring down his blood sugar and then hospitalized him for three days at the Children's Hospital. The next two days his parents were taught about diabetes care and how to administer insulin.

Dr. Sarah Adi, Peyton’s physician and the medical director of the Madison Clinic for Pediatric Diabetes at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine. Hospital, said, "It is not common for infants and toddlers to have type 1 diabetes," however incidence is gradually increasing. The main peak diagnosis periods are when children are aged 5 to 6 or early adolescence. The JDRF website indicates that nearly 3 million Americans have type 1 diabetes.

Some 85 percent are adults, many having grown up with the disorder, and 15 percent are children or adolescents. Type 1 diabetes can strike suddenly and require life-long dependence on insulin injections.

JDRF’s website lists 10 warning signs of type 1 diabetes: Extreme thirst, frequent urination, drowsiness or lethargy, increased appetite, sudden weight loss, sudden vision changes, sugar in the urine, fruity odor on the breath, heavy or labored breathing, and stupor or unconsciousness.

**Managing type 1 diabetes**

"Check your levels, Peyton," Shelby calls out while her son skatesboards. "Your eye looks funny."

He sits down and quickly pulls out the glucometer, pricks his finger, and replays, "I said, "OK."

Shelby says that her son can eat cake just like everybody else at a birthday party — they just need to prepare for the event.

"In advance of the party, we take the glucose measurement and match a precise amount of insulin that is delivered through his pump," she says.

Type 1 diabetes is not caused by eating too much sugar, but if the blood sugar levels in the body are not controlled correctly, one can experience serious health complications.

"It has been a really hot topic. There is a misconception in the public that type 1 diabetes results because people have an unhealthy lifestyle," Adi said. "Parents and children are offended by such remarks.

Adi explained that type 2 diabetes is "mostly related to insulin resistance caused by a lack of physical activity, being overweight or genetic factors." The sugar, or glucose, metabolic process is affected because the body either resists the effects of insulin hormone or does not produce enough. It can also be a life-threatening disease.

Type 2 diabetes is more common in adults and represents 90 percent of all diabetic patients. The other 10 percent of diabetics have type 1 diabetes, or have gestational diabetes, which occurs during pregnancy. As childhood obesity becomes a problem, type 2 diabetes increases in the pediatric population.

There are nearly 600 pediatric patients enrolled in the Madison Clinic, which treats both type 1 and type 2. The clinic has a team of endocrinologists, clinical psychologists, nurses, diabetes educators, social workers and dietitians.

The role of insulin

The JDRF website cautions, "Insulin is not a cure for diabetes, nor does it prevent its potential complications, which may include kidney failure, blindness, heart disease, stroke and amputation."

Shelby is often asked, "How does the insulin get into Peyton’s body?"

She explains the pump is inserted with a needle into his body and the needle is changed every three days. The pump delivers insulin when he eats, and in small doses all day long, much like our pancreas work. He also has a glucometer that continuously monitors blood sugar, which also has to be inserted into his body. He does finger pricks four to eight times a day. Every day he eats must be weighed and measured, and that data must be input into the pump to calculate its correct insulin dosages.

Adjustments are made for travel, exercise and sickness. Peyton takes his diabetes kit everywhere, but he can’t wear it for some activities, such as roller coaster rides.

"Insulin describes type 1 diabetes as a ‘thinking person’s disease’ and says it is a ‘never-ending, 24/7 analytical process.’

Every day they interpret Peyton’s blood sugar numbers, exercise, food, etc. to determine how much insulin he requires to keep his blood levels as normal as possible. They try to optimize the blood sugar control.

"Parents become so intertwined — they are the replacement pancreas for their child — until the child learns to manage his treatment, usually by late adolescence."

"People with type 1 diabetes still run the risk of dangerous life-threatening high or low-blood glucose levels — despite constant attention, according to JDRF.

Peyton takes his diabetes kit to Park Elementary School in Mill Valley where a school nurse monitors his care. The nurse oversees 500 students at the elementary schools and one middle school in the city. Because Peyton has attended Park for four years, he says he feels comfortable with the students and staff.

"I have been his best friend since kindergarten," Peyton says. "He sticks up for me if kids ask me questions — he reminds me to check the numbers on my glucose monitor."

**Walking for the cure**

Walk to Cure Diabetes has been a Brock family event since 2006, when Peyton was in a strudel. His parents and his 9-year-old sister, Sydney, and 14-year-old brother, Chandler, have always participated with Peyton.

"There have been so many advances in the past 10 to 15 years for diabetes care, such as the pump and sensors, which have improved our outlook for life tremendously," Shelby says. "It allows him to live like the other boys — riding his bike, skateboarding, and eating what all the other kids eat."

"Since I am social, I seek information and support," she says. "JDRF has been our main support group. We appreciate all of their help and their mission to find a cure for type 1 diabetes."

JDRF holds more than 200 walks throughout the country and dozens internationally, and the foundation’s fundraising goal is $65 million for research. Participants in this year’s walk have a chance to meet ambassadors like Peyton at four locations around the Bay Area during October. Peyton and his family will invite other children with type 1 diabetes is "Never drive anything like an ATV or do anything physical when your blood sugar is low, because you could go lower and possibly faint."

As he opens by on his skateboard, he yells over his shoulder, "When I turn 18, I am going skydiving!"

Contributing writer Michelle Aschbeld covers health care for The Ark.

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