Local family celebrates 60 years of ?kicking Type 1?s butt?

Aged just 11, Mason Dos Anjos celebrated a significant anniversary this month ? his 10-year ?dia-versary,? marking a decade since he was first diagnosed as a toddler with Type 1 diabetes.

It wasn't just an anniversary of a diagnosis ? in their words, it was a chance to mark ?10 years of kicking T1's butt? and, in a true celebratory anniversary, they invited other area residents giving T1's glutes ?what for? to make it a round 60 years' worth of festivities.

Last Tuesday, Mason celebrated his 10-year milestone with Jake and Logan, two others who have trounced their first decade with the disease, alongside Chris, who is marking a 30-year anniversary of his own. The party took place at Aurora's Boston Pizza location, where they served as celebrity waiters, with 10 per cent of all sales before 5 and 7 p.m. going to I Challenge Diabetes.

?We wanted to make a difference because 10 years of thriving with T1 is a big deal? and I wanted to make a difference for Mason with I Challenge,? says Mason's mother, Miriam Dos Anjos. ?It was incredible. We had the community buying tickets via e-transfer and it was nice to see the community was celebrating, even coming in as far as Guelph.?

In fact, they packed the place ? a fitting community effort for National Diabetes Awareness Month.

Since Mason's diagnosis at 16-months, the Dos Anjos family has been working to raise awareness of T1, providing support to other families at the start of what can be a very trying journey.

?It has been interesting,? says Mason when asked on what this journey has been like for him. ?The constant ups and downs. When my sugars are high, my stomach hurts and I have nightmares. When I'm low, I feel droopy. I never have a break. I have devices attached to me all day, every day. They keep me alive. I have to carry my kit everywhere, which has my sugar low treatments, my cell phones and my emergency contacts in case my sugars drop so low I lose consciousness. It's counting all of the carbs and measuring my food to establish my insulin. I was bullied for having T1D. So many things I have to think about just to survive on a daily basis.?

As advocates and mentors, they try to take some of the guess-work out for families, providing what might be a different perspective on the tools needed to thrive.

?People need to know that they are not alone, because Type 1 Diabetes, like many other chronic health conditions and medical conditions, can be very lonely and isolating,? says Miriam, chuckling that people might be tired of seeing her social media posts during National Diabetes Awareness Month; but these messages, she says, are real, raw and from the heart.

?Some of my posts aren't the easiest to read and some of the posts are more upbeat, but I am real about it: this is what this disease is ? the good, the bad and the ugly. It's about being real, but I also want to bring awareness about the signs and symptoms of Type 1 Diabetes: the increased thirst, the frequent urination, the bed-wetting, the extreme hunger, weight loss, irritability, blurred vision ? all of these things can be masked and seen as the flu, when really they can be the onset of Type One diabetes, or you could be going into diabetic ketoacidosis, a very serious complication about Type 1.

?I get a lot of questions about, ?Does it get easier? How can you do this?' I mentor a lot of families just because Mason was diagnosed with 16 months, and as we have been living with this for 10 years, so people just want to know the real, the facts. It's a sense of community and that is a really big thing.?

At the start of their family's diabetes journey, Miriam says they were fortunate to have close friends that although they didn't understand the ins and outs of the disease, they were more than happy to provide a network of support. Yet, Miriam sometimes felt she didn't have someone with lived experience to whom she could call in times where she felt she was ?struggling.?

?I reached out on social media and had very close friends in other provinces I would be calling and texting all night for their support. I really thought about how I could help another family because I didn't want them to feel as lonely as we were ? and isolated and petrified,? she says. ?I really enjoy working with families now. Some conversations are hard and we're in tears, and sometimes conversations are great, but it is that sense of community, belonging and understanding that is huge and has been very beneficial and rewarding for me and my journey with Mason.?

By Brock Weir