

## Three-year-old Mason named 'Ambassador' for Walk to Cure Diabetes



**By Brock Weir**

Three-year-old Mason Dos Anjos' face lights up whenever he sees another person with an insulin pump.

Despite his age, the Aurora boy is already nearing expert-level with his own pump, having been diagnosed with Type One Diabetes as a toddler.

His family has taken baby steps to help Mason get to a point where he can hand out pro tips on living with Type One, but he is taking a bold leap forward this Sunday to try and help make diabetes a thing of the past.

Mason has been chosen as one of the 'faces' of this year's Telus Walk to Cure Diabetes, benefiting the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, which will be held June 12 at Bruce's Mill Conservation Area.

Having participated in the walk for the first time last year under the team banner 'Mason's Battle', his young age and his team's fundraising prowess caught the eye of organizers and now he will stride through the walk as an official 'ambassador' for the cause.

'It is an honour,' says Mason's mother, Miriam. 'At first I thought it was really kind of cool, and then I actually got to meet with the other members of the Family Committee, and it is really neat to be organizing all of this for the kids and raising awareness of Type One. At the end of the day, we all have the common goal of finding a cure and that is what the JRDF is trying to do.'

'Mason played such a huge part last year as a participant and it is neat this year because I have a lot of really good friends who have been very supportive and their kids are walking with Mason. His team is a bunch of little people and, to me, that is huge because he is being supported for who he is. I have the moms' support and they all understand what Type One diabetes, what the signs are, what the symptoms are, and that is huge.'

Of course, it hasn't been an easy path not only to get Mason to the point where he is today or to build that awareness for how Type One differs from Type Two. The latter is a continual challenge, an occasion to which they will always rise. While not yet in school, Mason understands he has Type One, he understands that he has an insulin pump, and his explanation of what it is and what it does is simple: 'It makes me feel better.'

He does his own 'finger pokes' to test his blood sugar, is a pen pal through snail mail, no less! with another young boy in Alberta

with Type One, and it is one of Mason's goals to head west to meet his new friend Liam.

?It is the neatest thing to see, they don't feel like they are different, and Mason is starting to feel different,? says Miriam. ?He is starting to hate it and some days he says to me, ?Mummy, I don't want diabetes anymore.' That is hard for me to take as he is three, but he has been dealing with it since he was 16 months old. I get it. I would get sick of it too. I don't want to be poked with needles all the time, have to wear a pump, and have to watch what I eat. Him being around other people of all ages who have Type 1 is very cool. It was an emotional day. It is a huge community you didn't know existed, but they are all brought together on this walk day.

?[Raising money through this walk] I want Mason to be able to one day say ?I had Type One diabetes' instead of ?I have.' He can do everything everyone else can, but it is harder. It is also about promoting awareness.?