

# Day of achievement

## KIDS WITH DIABETES WELCOME IRONMAN TRIATHLETE TO EVENT

BY MARK ASHTON  
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CHARLTON — Summer camp — a time for volleyball going boating, singing around the campfire and swimming, throwing Frisbees and measuring blood sugar, playing soccer and perfecting the use of your insulin pump

Wait... what? Yes, the summer camp experience at Camp Joslin is all the fun things that kids age 6-16 might enjoy, but also a whole lot more — including plenty of diabetes education. "If your blood sugar is lower than 120, lie down over here," said the camp counselor on the megaphone. "If you're on a bionic pancreas, disconnect over there!"

The occasion was preparation for a morning biathlon — competitive swimming and running, an event enjoyed annually by some 150 youngsters from throughout the region. Ironman Triathlete Jay Hewitt was on hand to lead campers from the Clara Barton Camp in Oxford (with about 90 girls) and Camp Joslin in Charlton (with about 70 boys) in their annual biathlon on Friday, July 19, at the Joslin site, 150 Richardson Corner Road.

Hewitt, who has Type 1 diabetes himself, is an ambassador for Novo Nordisk, a global health care company headquartered in Denmark, and served as host for the local day of fun competition in the sun, now in its sixth year at Camp Joslin.

The campers, who come from throughout the region ("but we've had some from London and Spain," says Camp Director Mark Bissell) began their swimming contest with a staggered start, getting to choose one of two course lengths. After swimming, they transitioned into the running portion of the biathlon at the camp's softball field. While the competitors were timed and awards were presented to the top three finishers for both boys and girls, the focus was much less on competition than on "preparation, participation, and personal achievement," according to its organizers.

"We want to give them the whole experience," said Bissell, who's been at the summer camp for seven years and its year-round director for two. Monthly events take place year round from the Barton Center, which opened in 1932. The Charlton camp, named for Dr. Elliott P. Joslin, a pioneer in the study and treatment of diabetes, opened in 1948.

Bissell himself has had diabetes for 35 years, and both his wife and daughter also have diabetes. "Dr. Joslin was a visionary" whose leaps in diabetes treatment were so far ahead of the times that they weren't appreciated — or even fully recognized — until the 1990s, said Bissell. At that point, faithful followers who had always recognized his genius had buttons made declaring, "Told you so!"

On the day of the biathlon, Hewitt talked to campers about how he challenges himself to succeed in spite of his dependence on insulin. For the youngsters, it was a race against the clock and against themselves to succeed. Prior to competing, even before putting on their sneakers, they monitored their blood sugar and learned how to manage their diabetes during strenuous activity.



Some 150 campers with Type 1 diabetes enjoyed swimming, running, and then an afternoon of fun at Camp Joslin on one of the hottest days of summer.

And closely monitored or momentarily disconnected for the competition were an array of patches, insulin pumps, PICC lines, ports, and bionic pancreases. Thus unencumbered, the kids demonstrated the vim, vigor, and vitality typical of campers at any other summer camp in New England.

"They play soccer, basketball, lacrosse, they throw Frisbees and footballs," said Bissell. "They love huge water fights, or just hanging. We started a water slide on the hill over there because of the heat, and it ended up in a mudslide. Their favorite thing right now is 'gaga' (dodgeball in a box). Whatever there is they'll do it."

Other than the oft-megaphoned reminders to "make sure you reconnect your pump when you're done," in fact, Friday's biathlon was a study in youthful exuberance, determination, and how to enjoy good old-fashioned summer camp fun.

"I strongly believe that diabetes management can successfully be integrated into one's life and ambitions," said Hewitt. "Raising awareness is also important. A study commissioned by Novo Nordisk and conducted by the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF) predicts a dramatic increase in diabetes between 2010 and 2050."

Using new information from the Centers for Disease Control, the IAF diabetes model estimates that the number of Massachusetts residents living with diabetes (both diagnosed and undiagnosed) will increase 61 percent by 2025, from about 557,000 to 895,000. The resulting medical and societal cost of diabetes is estimated at about \$8.8 billion — a 66 percent increase from 2010.

An Ironman Triathlete competing as a member of the U.S. National Team for Long Distance Triathlon World Championships in 2004, 2005, and 2006, Hewitt lives and trains in Greenville,

S.C., where he is a practicing attorney. Diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at the age of 24, he began racing in Ironman triathlons "to prove the heights one can reach with proper diabetes management." A frequent motivational speaker, he shares his "Finish Line Vision" with organizations, companies, and schools across the country. The Barton Center for Diabetes Education Inc. offers a powerful support system to children and families with insulin-dependent diabetes by providing numerous year-round education, recreation, and support programs. The center runs resident camps (including Clara Barton Camp and Camp Joslin), day camps, family camps, adventure and wilderness leadership programs, and year-round weekend programs. For more information, visit: www.bartoncenter.org.

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Putting on their best post-swimming biathlete poses are, from left: Kayla Ketchaw, 11, of Rye Brook, N.Y., Avah Wasicki, 11, of Stafford, Conn., and Abby Clar, 12, of Newton.



Ironman Triathlete Jay Hewitt holds court with summer campers prior to the swimming and running, in which he also took part (non-competitively).

**WEBSTER TIMES**

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**PUBLIC MEETINGS**

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**DUDLEY**

MONDAY, AUG 5.

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