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## Racing toward summer Fundraiser benefits camps for children with diabetes

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Former campers Joshua R. Davis, facilities manager at Elliot P. Joslin Camp in Charlton, and Danielle E. Eid, director of the Clara Barton Camp, stand near the sign that will mark the start of the race. (T&G Staff/CHRISTINE PETERSON)

**OXFORD** — Barton Center staff members working in support of the ninth annual St. Patrick's Road Race/Walk fundraiser on March 14 know from personal experience that money raised can change the lives of children with diabetes.

Joshua R. Davis, 28, facilities manager at Charlton's Elliot P. Joslin Camp for boys with diabetes, was a healthy and happy hockey-playing 9-year-old growing up in Wrentham in 1990. On the day after Christmas, his thoughts were on the new Rollerblades he'd opened the day before.

His mother was worried. She saw something different in her son. He seemed always thirsty and was urinating frequently. When she realized he had lost 10 pounds in one week, she called the doctor.

After some tests, the doctor learned that Josh's pancreas was not producing insulin. Instead of burning sugar for energy, Josh's body was burning fat, loading his urine with ketones. His blood sugar, which was supposed to be in the range of 80 to 120 mg/dL, was 800. He had Type 1 diabetes.

"My mother was too emotional to tell me. My father told me and said, 'Pack your bags,' " Mr. Davis said. Josh and his mother immediately went to the Joslin Clinic in Boston, where they stayed for a week for diabetes education.

"Now, they usually don't even keep you overnight," Mr. Davis said.

He was told he would never be able to eat sugar again and cried when he received his first shot of insulin in his arm. "They gave me two 2-liter bottles of regular soda and told me to drink them. Now, they'd give you some water to flush you out. They said that was the last regular soda I'd ever drink. I did it. I cried. I vomited. In those days, before insulin pumps, we had to be in synch all the time. Food and snacks were eaten like clockwork," he said.

Going back to school, he was the only child in the building with diabetes. His parents gave him insulin shots at home twice a day, but he had to leave the classroom regularly to visit the nurse's office to check his blood. "It was a pain in those days. You had to milk your finger to get out the blood, then put it on a strip and wait four minutes to get results. It was disruptive. Today, you prick your finger and the meter takes five seconds for a reading."

He said that readings are vital, because "low blood sugar can lead to seizures, and high blood sugar can lead to retinopathy, neuropathy, problems with the feet, liver, kidneys — anything to do with blood."

That summer, Josh went to the Joslin Camp, and his life changed. "The counselors gave me my first couple of shots, but then I saw the other kids giving themselves the insulin, so I did it myself. Positive peer pressure. Checking your blood is the norm. For the first time in my life, I was surrounded by people who knew exactly how I felt. I was normal."

Josh returned to camp every year, moving up through the ranks as a counselor-in-training, counselor and full-time summer staffer. He has been working at the camp year-round since 2005.

Danielle E. Eid, 27, director of the Clara Barton Camp, was 16 months old and living in Dedham when she started vomiting, urinating frequently and generally acting cranky on the day before Valentine's Day in 1983.

"My mother called the doctor. He said there was a bug going around, and told her to give me soda and popsicles. I got worse," she said.

Danielle's parents took her to the hospital, where she was admitted when her blood sugar was found to be over 800.

She had Type 1, insulin-dependent diabetes.

"I cried sometimes when I got the shots. Sometimes it hurts. I remember telling my mother I didn't want any more shots when I was 8 years old. She asked me if I'd rather have a disease. I thought about it, but decided cancer would be worse," Ms. Eid said.

Danielle was the only diabetic in her school, but soon became comfortable checking her blood sugar in class or in the nurse's office.

"The only other person I knew with diabetes was my uncle. Then, when I was 8, I came to Barton Camp. I'd been told by the doctors, 'If you don't do this, you will lose your legs or your eyes.' I was thrilled to see diabetic counselors with legs and eyes. They made it; so could I. Seeing them healthy was great! I felt normal," Ms. Eid said.

She returned every summer, and at 15 became a leader-in-training, then continued to work her way up, until she was named camp director in 2006.

She said that even during camp, there have been difficult moments. "Years ago, we had a field trip to a beach. A woman there came over to talk to us. When she heard we were from a camp for diabetics, she grabbed her grandson and ran."

Mr. Davis said, "Her generation wasn't taught. The knowledge wasn't out there. Diabetes is easy to take care of, if you take care. You can die from the symptoms of diabetes, not from diabetes. We have our bodies and our lives in our own hands."

Elizabeth M. Papp, community relations, outreach and event manager for the Barton Center for Diabetes Education Inc., said the St. Patrick's road race and other fundraisers can change the lives of diabetic children ages 6 to 16 who otherwise might not be able to afford to participate in the center's resident camps, day camps, family camps and other programs. The Barton Center owns and operates the Barton Camp and has been managing and operating Camp Joslin since 2008.

Ms. Papp said funds from the road race will go to the campership fund, which supports some of the thousands of campers who participate in resident, weekend and day programs at Barton and Joslin camps, as well as day camps in Boston, Springfield, New York and Connecticut.

Runners and walkers may register the day of the race for \$30, and are encouraged to obtain pledges. One registration fee will be waived for each \$75 raised in pledges. Runners will compete in six men's and six women's age categories. A corned beef and cabbage buffet and awards banquet will be held after the event. Corporate and other sponsors are also being sought. For more information, call (508) 987-2056, ext. 105, or visit [www.bartoncenter.org](http://www.bartoncenter.org).