

People with Diabetes Website:

Nel Peach story - web copy & multimedia plan

WEB PAGE ONE

PHOTO: NEL CLOSEUP

Last winter while marathon training in the snows of Salmon Arm, British Columbia, she fell. Nel Peach holds up her left hand when asked about any long-term impacts from the slip that broke her wrist in three places.

"I can no longer give someone the finger."

The pinky and index finger rise up, but the two middle fingers do not. "Not that I would" she adds mischievously.

A new inability to raise her middle finger in no way limits Nel Peach's ability to tell people exactly what she thinks. Her feistiness, sometimes-startling forthrightness and indomitable character drives her approach to her greatest passion -- diabetes advocacy.

Nel Peach is passionate about educating others about improving one's quality of life as a person with diabetes. She's also passionate about changing government policies to make essential diabetes medications within the financial reach of all Canadians with diabetes.

WEB PAGE TWO

Nel was diagnosed unusually late - she was 42 when she began noticing her symptoms. She was working then as Director of Food Services at St. Mary's Hospital in New Westminster, British Columbia. She was thirsty, peeing all the time, had itchy skin, and lost six pounds in five days. She went to the doctor and said, "I think I have diabetes." Test results proved she was right. But she was misdiagnosed. The doctor was certain she was Type-2, because of her age. She told the doctor that she needed insulin. She continued to persist, and eventually he realized that she was right. She wasted no time in getting as much information as possible about her diagnosis, and in surrounding herself with a team of people who could help her live her best life.

VIDEO: ADVICE CLIP 1 - PASSION/IT'S SERIOUS

- Nel discusses what she would say to a person who has just received a diabetes diagnosis

VIDEO: ADVICE CLIP 2 – QUALITY OF LIFE

When Nel received her diagnosis, she began her mass self-education and lifestyle change campaign, and is as active with it today. She knows that her health is too important to take for granted, so she decided to powerfully take on this condition in spite of its challenges. As part of her self-management regimen, she walks at least eight kilometres each day. She eats the same amount of carbohydrates for breakfast each day, for lunch each day, and for each dinner. For years she weighed everything, and now can calculate by sight.

Nel's quality of life has changed dramatically since switching to insulin pump therapy. Her husband Gordon recounts for some time the stories about Nel crashing to the ground when her sugar balance was off. They talk about how hugely different this is, how much less frequently this happens, since switching to 'the pump'. Nel's involvement in diabetes fundraising and advocacy would be much much different without the pump, she says, because before the pump, she just wasn't as well.

She stresses how important her 'health team' is to her ongoing energy. All kinds of support are required when one has diabetes, she says – medical, family, employer... She particularly acknowledges her pump nurse / trainer, and her husband for his support.

Now living in Salmon Arm BC and 67 years old, her energy is amazing to most people, including those half her age. In October, Nel will participate in a half-marathon in Kelowna, and then begin training for her second full marathon, which will happen at Disneyworld in 2008. "When you train for a full marathon, you don't have to do the full length, 42 kilometres, until the day of the marathon. If you have reached 32 kilometres in your training, you most likely will do the 42".

PHOTO: (video still) NEL RUNNING; TEAM DIABETES SHIRT

Nel does the races as part of Team Diabetes Canada. Team participants walk or run in world-class marathon events across Canada and throughout the world. They also work to increase public awareness of diabetes, and they inspire their communities to get active and involved. They create lifestyle changes that reduce the risk of obesity and Type 2 diabetes, while raising funds in support of the research, education, advocacy and programming that the Canadian Diabetes Association delivers in communities across Canada.

Every run involves fundraising from her own community in order to participate in the race. She started in 2003, raising \$ 6200 as part of Team Diabetes in a 10km race in Hawaii, and so far in all races has raised over \$ 30,000 for the Canadian Diabetes Association. She insists that she shouldn't be thought of as a marathoner, as she walks much of the race lengths, but as a fundraiser.

PHOTO: NEL ROME MARATHON

Nel's first full marathon as part of Team Diabetes was in Rome in 2006. She wasn't intending to do another marathon after her first. "I remember being quite elated that I was capable of doing such a thing. The previous day because of tendonitis I thought I would not be capable of doing it, but I thought, 'no I am going to push through'. And I did. So I was just on cloud nine, especially when I came through there upright and smiling. But I was really aching by the end of the Rome marathon, and said 'never again'. But then I learned about Mary and Chantal ... and I said, 'oh, yes you will'.

PHOTO: POSTER SHE INTENDS TO WEAR IN DISNEYWORLD MARATHON, SHOWING THAT SHE IS RUNNING FOR CHANTAL AND MARY

The two women from BC's interior died from diabetes-related complications. Nel will do the Disney Marathon in memory of Mary and Chantal ... "because I can".

In 2004, Nel was given a 20-year pin and certificate of appreciation by the Canadian Diabetes Association. She has chaired large diabetes education conferences and sold more raffle tickets than she can remember. She is active on the PeopleWithDiabetes.ca message boards. She began forming a self-help group in the Lower Mainland within a year of her diagnosis. She has run diabetes support groups in the Shuswap community, and currently mentors people in Salmon Arm who are switching to (or thinking about) insulin pump therapy.

Nel thinks about the benefits to her from running these local support groups. "I know I'm able to help people who are newer to this process than I am. I've been an insulin pumper since August 2001. And I'm able to learn from others who have been pumping longer than I have. And the bottom line is, that I've met so many nice people through all this, too."

In the past couple of years, Nel has been expanding her diabetes volunteerism to national advocacy. She is on the committee for the Dissemination of the Clinical Guidelines of the Canadian Diabetes Association.

VIDEO: Nel explains why she got involved in diabetes advocacy

VIDEO: Nel says this is the most urgent issue that she wants to address

If success is measured by getting up more times than one falls down, Nel is an unqualified success. Diabetes has not been her only life-changing health issue. Nel is also a breast cancer survivor. Her Type-1 diabetes diagnosis was in 1983. In 1984 she became engaged, and got her breast cancer diagnosis. She credits her support system with her ability to bounce back.

VIDEO: SUPPORT SYSTEM

Once every ten seconds, Nel Peach stresses, someone in the world dies of diabetes-related complications. Two million Canadians have diabetes. Something must be done.

Her own example is teaching other people with diabetes, other citizens, that something *can* be done.

VIDEO: NEL TALKS ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE ONE PERSON CAN MAKE

Links: TeamType1.org
[International Diabetes Federation](http://InternationalDiabetesFederation.org)