



Regional Champion – Nick V, Atlantic Canada

Our family was diagnosed with type 1 June 5, 2013; Nicholas was 2 years old. We had just welcomed his sister Caroline into the world 3 months before that and our focus sadly switched from enjoying our newborn to keeping our toddler alive. Our diagnosis story is proof of doctors and medical staff not considering type 1 in young children and being unprepared, but luckily we eventually made it through the training at the IWK with the amazing endocrinology staff and have been on track to good health ever since.

As with many newly diagnosed families the endless circle of negative and heartbreaking thoughts ran through our heads. Our brains immediately went to our hopes and dreams we had for our little boy, now destroyed because of needles, carb. counts, 3 am testing... how could he ever live a normal life? He will always be singled out because he has such high needs!

Fast-forward 7 months. We were once again enjoying life, Nicholas' care hadn't become easier but we finally got the hang of it and were comfortable to vacation and do fun things together. I started thinking about how fun it would be to meet with other type 1 families in our area. I googled and came across D-Campss Family camp at Brigadoon Village, registration now open. I didn't even read it thorough, I signed us up and paid the deposit and excitedly told the now 3 year old Nicholas about how awesome camp is going to be, but even I had no idea just how awesome.

We arrived at Brigadoon nervous to meet new people and having no idea what to expect. It was the usual, "sign here, sign there, welcome to camp, let us show you to your cabin". We were all starting to worry I made a mistake when all campers got together in the main hall for supper and the opening of camp and we looked around the room and our children were the youngest by about 4 years – we worried we wouldn't relate to any of these people and Nicholas wouldn't get the full effect of having met someone just like him. But then after supper, in walks Jackson & family! We now call them our Dia-cousins and try to see them as much as we can. Jackson and Nick have become inseparable, his family have helped us tackle diabetes and I hope we do the same for them. Both boys are high energy, lovers of life and refuse to let this stupid disease hold them back from anything!

The remainder of our first family camp was awesome! We got to know, learn from and teach so many people with the same struggles and successes as us; people who 'get it'. We saw our boy having a blast with someone just like him, we felt supported and were finally comfortable for

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him to go further than arms reach with someone other than a family member to do activities. The camp staff were inspirational as a type 1 Mom; they themselves living with type 1, proving to us that growing up with this disease will not hold you back but launch you forward into becoming a smart, positive and determined asset to society.

A lot of how we manage and think about diabetes comes from D-Camps and the community we met there. This month I am signing up for our 4th family camp. Nicholas is finally old enough to go to Lion Maxwell on his own and shakes with excitement when he speaks of it, but I wasn't about to let him have all the fun! Caroline is now old enough to benefit from the siblings aspect of family camp, they can be the forgotten family members and I want her to have that support system of friends too.

Nicholas has an entrepreneurial heart and has always dreamed of setting up a lemonade stand at the end of our driveway – but we live on a 80km/h rural road. When we found out about the “Put A Squeeze” campaign at camp last year Nicholas immediately decided we were doing it! I ordered the kit, we decorated the sign and we were offered an excellent location at a garden-centre in Truro. In just 3 hours, Nicholas raised over \$120 selling lemonade, cucumber water and cookies at the price of “Please Pay What You Can”. So many people refused to put anything less than a \$5 in the jar. We were so proud to send his earnings along to our D-Camps to help them run these awesome programs for our D-community. Nicholas also had a \$5/\$5 birthday party this past October where he asked his guests if they wished to give him a gift to bring \$5 for him to save for a toy and \$5 for him to donate to D-Camps; he proudly handed an envelope with \$175 of birthday donation money to Lara at a hockey game Diabetes Canada invited us to attend.

We will always be huge supporters of D-Camps and the wonderful programs they put on for families with type 1. We are so fortunate to have the organization, staff and volunteers here for our children who deserve to be children, and D-Camps make that possible.

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