

## **Sophie Meinhardt Memorial Scholarship 2011**

**By Sam Paff**

I have done many things for other people in which I didn't get any personal gain but the one I'm going to write about is how much I help my sister with her diabetes. My sister was diagnosed with diabetes on September 1, 2009 and my family has been through a lot since then. We have had to make many changes and have learned a lot. Before she was diagnosed, I looked at the disease diabetes as just a disease that other people had, I never knew about the many challenges that the person and their family faced.

I remember the day my mom came home from the doctor with my sister and told me she had diabetes. I remember I didn't want to go to football that night because I was crying and shaking so much. They had to go to Children's Hospital for a week and my grandparents came to stay with us. I was very worried.

I'm very involved in helping her because I have to babysit her a lot and I have to watch her every day after school. I always thought that diabetics just couldn't eat sugar but I learned that their pancreas doesn't produce insulin like everyone else's does; therefore, we had to give her shots of insulin every time she wanted something to eat. We also have to test her blood sugar before she eats anything because she could be low so in that case we'd have to give her food without giving her insulin. We used to have to give her a shot every night at 8:30 to help her too. There are many challenges we face with this and I have learned a lot. I know almost everything that I have to do.

Last year, I'd have to give her a shot when I would babysit after school each time she wanted to eat. Recently she got an insulin pump that gives her the insulin on its own. This was all very stressful to me because I didn't enjoy giving her shots every time she wanted something to eat. Every day after school we'd come home and she'd check her blood and tell me what she wanted to eat. I'd count the carbohydrates in it and had to give her a shot which was depressing and

stressful to her and me. My family and I know that she never enjoyed getting shots and we hated giving them to her. Now that she has the pump all we have to do is put in the number of carbs and her blood sugar if it's above 120. It all sounds easy. It's not.

Even though she has the pump we still face many challenges. One of the many challenges is when her blood goes low. When her blood goes low it's usually because she was too active, she hasn't eaten recently, or there's times when we have to guess the carbs on foods and there's times when we don't guess correctly and she goes low. We know when she's low because she gets all cranky, whiny, and mean. Most of the time she can feel when she's low too. She's active and likes to play Wii, run around with friends, or play sports. Usually when she's about to be active we give her carbs but sometimes it's not enough and she just goes low.

My life has changed a lot since the day she was diagnosed. The fact of knowing she has diabetes and having to give her shots and helping out a lot put a lot of stress on me. My parents both work and my brother is in high school and is very busy therefore, I have to help my family.

Another one of the many changes is how much I get to go out on weekends and see my friends. I had to change the amount I went out because not everyone could babysit her. It's easier now with the pump and she can go to more people's houses. I still see my friends pretty much.

Family and friends of my parents have told me how well I treat my sister. People have told my parents how impressed they are seeing me take care of my sister. This makes me feel good.

I still face many challenges today. I still have to count carbs in foods, stay home some weekends, and I just worry a lot. Sometimes I have to guess the carbs on foods and I think, "What if I guessed wrong? Or What if something happens?" and I just worry. There's times when my sister and I go out to eat with our grandparents and I have to look up the carbohydrates on foods or sometimes

guess on the carbs. This has all hit me very fast and I have to overcome challenges. This all has helped to build my character and maturity levels.

The only gain that I get from helping with my sisters diabetes is the gain of knowing I helped out and I have a happy, healthy sister. I am almost positive that this makes my sister happy. She knows that this depresses me sometimes and she knows how much I help. We still fight like every other brother and sister do but I try to be there for my family as best I can.