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A grandfather's love At 67 Charlie Barnes goes to extremes to raise funds for Juvenile Diabetes

By JENNIFER ENRIGHT

When Nassagaweya resident Charlie Barnes began fundraising for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) about two years ago he was a one-man operation in many respects. Today, though, when you talk to him about his efforts to raise funds for research on Type 1 or juvenile diabetes you're likely to hear him mention the Geoffrey Team, named after his grandson Geoffrey who was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes in 2003.

The team — consisting of Barnes, Barnes' daughter Janet, and Janet's friend Carolyn Calpin — is dedicated to raising money for research on juvenile diabetes. Juvenile diabetes is a chronic autoimmune disease that strikes infants, children, teens, and young adults. According to JDRF, a worldwide non-profit charitable organization that provides funding to scientists researching this type of diabetes, over 200,000 Canadians are afflicted with Type 1 diabetes, and many of them are children such as Geoffrey.

Barnes, Janet and Carolyn are all taking part in physically challenging events as a way to raise money and awareness about juvenile diabetes. Each of them is training for a 160 km cycling event sponsored by JDRF in California's Carmel Valley on May 21.

Barnes, 67, is looking forward to teaming up with his daughter, who is a Canadian citizen living in California, and her friend Calpin, a physician who works for Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto. They plan to sport both American and Canadian flags on their bikes which is appropriate since they are among the few non-Americans taking part, says Barnes.

Barnes began his efforts to raise funds for JDRF in 2003. Determined to assist his grandson Geoffrey in his fight against juvenile diabetes, he decided to put his physical abilities to the test. He took part in the Toronto Marathon in October 2003 spending hours in preparation for the physically challenging event and last year he participated in an Olympic length triathlon at Guelph Lake Conservation Area. No small feat for someone in his sixties.

To prepare for his latest endeavour, Barnes has been cycling short distances and he's gradually working his way

up to longer and longer cycling rides. "A month ago, I did three and a half hours, then four and a half, then six last week (second last week of April)." Barnes says his training program will be rigorous right up until 10 days prior to the event, when he'll ease up slightly by riding shorter distances to give his body time to rest.

The Geoffrey Team hopes to raise \$15,000 in pledges and individual donations through its participation in the cycling event in California. And they also plan to participate in the annual JDRF Walk to Cure Diabetes at the Guelph Lake Conservation Area on June 19. The walk is actually a national event for JDRF, with about 45,000 people raising money for the foundation at walks held in different communities across Canada.

Is Barnes hopeful that all this effort will payoff? He says he is, especially since research has made significant advances in recent years. Type 1 diabetes, unlike adult or late onset diabetes, is a genetically based disease. But Barnes notes that recently there have been some successes in islet transplantation, which has emerged as one of the most promising options for restoring normal blood sugar in people with juvenile diabetes according to the JDRF. Islets of Langerhans or the clusters of cells inside the pancreas contain insulin-producing beta cells, and it's these islets that are destroyed in someone with Type 1 diabetes. But, as a result of research, islets taken from a donor's pancreas can be transferred to a person with Type 1 diabetes. In the last three years, there have been 250 islet transplants worldwide, with approximately 100 of those funded by JDRF.

Barnes says he has committed himself to continue raising money for JDRF and that means he will be taking part in more physical challenges following the event in California. He's thinking about running in the New York City Marathon next. "It's our family's dream that a cure will be found within the next decade," says Barnes.

Anyone who wishes to make a donation, can contact Charlie Barnes by mail at 13254 Second Line, R.R. #1, Campbellville, ON L0P 1B0. The phone number is 519-856-

9827 and the fax number is 519-856-1202. Barnes' email address is c_jbarn@sentex.net. Information about JDRF can be accessed at www.jdrf.ca.



PHOTO BY JENNIFER ENRIGHT

Charlie Barnes has raised thousands of dollars in support of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) since his grandson, Geoffrey (right), was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes in February of 2003. Charlie will be cycling in a JDRF sponsored event in California this month on May 21. Barnes says his grandson's life changed dramatically when he found out he had diabetes. At the age of 7 - Geoffrey is now 9 - he began a daily regimen of four insulin shots a day.