

Scootin' boogey

SIDEWALK TRAFFIC GETS BUSIER AS USE OF SCOOTERS GROWS

by ELLEN ASHTON-HAISTE

Every teenager knows that getting a set of "wheels" is a ticket to freedom and independence. But this isn't an idea reserved for the young. Hundreds of older adults are learning its truth as they turn to the burgeoning mobility technology to keep them out and about.

These are the people often seen zipping up and down sidewalks in towns and cities across the continent in a variety of three- or four-wheeled scooters.

"The need has grown for these devices and people are more aware of them because the information is out there through the marketing," says Deanne Kukulewich, assistive devices administrator for the Ontario March of Dimes. "They allow people to be independent, to be more self-reliant."

Scooters are a "booming market," says Bryce McBain, sales representative for the Toronto-based Therapy Supplies. He says 95 per cent of his customers are seniors. Some are slowed by arthritis while others are suffering more serious conditions such as multiple sclerosis. Many people, he says, can't walk distances without becoming short of breath, tired and even dizzy.

The need is as individual as the user. Evel Knievel, slowed by aches and pains from his many injuries over the years, has traded his stunt bike for a scooter and lends his name to advertising campaigns for Pride Mobility, one of the largest manufacturers of such devices.

Other notables who rely on scooters to keep them on their game include former Chicago Cub Ron Santo, who lost a leg to diabetes, and Charlie Weis, former New England Patriot and veteran coach, who suffered complications from surgery earlier this year which left him temporarily unable to walk.

"People don't want to be limited by their condition. They want to be independent and be able to go 25 miles a day," McBain says. "They usually get six to eight hours driving time out of these scooters. That allows them an improved quality of life. They're not sitting home in front of the television — they're out and about, meeting friends for coffee at the mall."

The diversity available is almost endless: three wheels, four

wheels, headlights, taillights, hazard lights, back-up horns, captain's seats, fold-down seats, seats that rotate, onboard battery chargers or external chargers, even foam-filled tires and a variety of lengths and weights.

And, while they are not recommended for extensive winter use, people can use them year-round provided they have a warm place to store them so the batteries don't freeze, McBain says.

With the growing popularity and burgeoning numbers of wheeled vehicles on the sidewalks, are there safety concerns?

They are "only as safe as the user," McBain admits, but says he has a stake in ensuring his clients know how to use them safely and will often go out several times with an occupational therapist to teach the client how to use the vehicle. He says he works hand in hand with therapists who will assess clients and help them decide what type of scooter is safest and most appropriate for them.

New scooters range in price from about \$2,800 to \$8,000, McBain says. However used models are available and less expensive and Therapy Supplies also rents them.

For people with permanent disability and limited finances, and who have been assessed by a qualified therapist, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Assistive Devices Program (ADP) will pay up to 75 per cent of the approved cost of equipment. The March of Dimes will also provide funding assistance as long as the money holds out. But, says Kukulewich, "with our program, when the funds are gone, they're gone." Her organization also works with other agencies and service clubs to help clients raise the needed financing.



Taste Meets Health

Diabetics are often people who really enjoy their food. Therefore, the diagnosis feels like a life sentence to bland, tasteless fare. It's downright depressing.

It's also not true.

"If you thought you'd never be able to eat something like Deep Dish Blackberry Cobbler with Lemon Hard Sauce, think again," says Linda Eugene, a certified diabetes educator. Working with author Sue Spitzer, Eugene spent a year creating, testing and tasting hundreds of delicious desserts that are featured in the duo's book *1,001 Delicious Desserts for People with Diabetes*, a sister volume to *1,001 Delicious Recipes for People with Diabetes*.

In an extensive introduction, Eugene explains how, with careful attention to portion control and the way foods are combined, diabetics can "splurge without guilt and have (their) cake and eat it too."

Recipes include cakes, pies, tarts, cream puffs, cheesecakes, cookies, puddings, custards, soufflés and cobblers. Each has nutritional information to help incorporate it into any type of diabetes meal plan.

This is one of three cookbooks, released late in 2002, for diabetics, from Chicago publisher Surrey Books and distributed in Canada by Raincoast Books.

For diabetics with sophisticated tastebuds and little time for kitchen duty, Betty Marks has created more than 200 savoury dishes that are easy to make and use fresh ingredients and plenty of herbs and spices. These are compiled in *Light and Easy Diabetes Cuisine*.

A native New Yorker, living in Manhattan, Marks has access to some of the world's most

sophisticated restaurants and cafés. She also has little time for cooking and has designed her recipes to get cooks out of the kitchen in record time.

Some of her favourites in the book are Cucumber Buttermilk Soup, Crunchy Chicken Bake, Garlic Ginger Mackerel with Spiced Rice Pilaf, Sweet Potato Crisps, Mocha Mousse and Vienna Cream.

In addition to including nutritional analyses, cooking and prep times, these recipes are set in easy-to-read large type.

For cooks who want even less time in the kitchen, Marks has another offering on the book market: *The Diabetes Double Quick Cookbook*. Here Marks' secret is the microwave and recipes like Creamy Crabmeat, Gingered Indian Lamb, Attila's Beef Goulash and Blueberry Cobbler prove that this kitchen appliance can do much more than defrost and reheat. These recipes also include nutritional information and exchanges for sound diabetes management.

In fact, the Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA) has developed new guidelines for the nutritional management of the disease, opening up more dining possibilities by dispelling the myth that diabetics must follow a strict dietary regime.

"While it's true that there is no special diet for people with diabetes, a healthy diet aimed at stabilizing or reducing weight is one of the cornerstones in the management of diabetes," says University of Toronto professor of medicine Dr. Tom Wolever, a spokesman for the national nutrition committee for the CDA.

Under the guidelines, people with diabetes

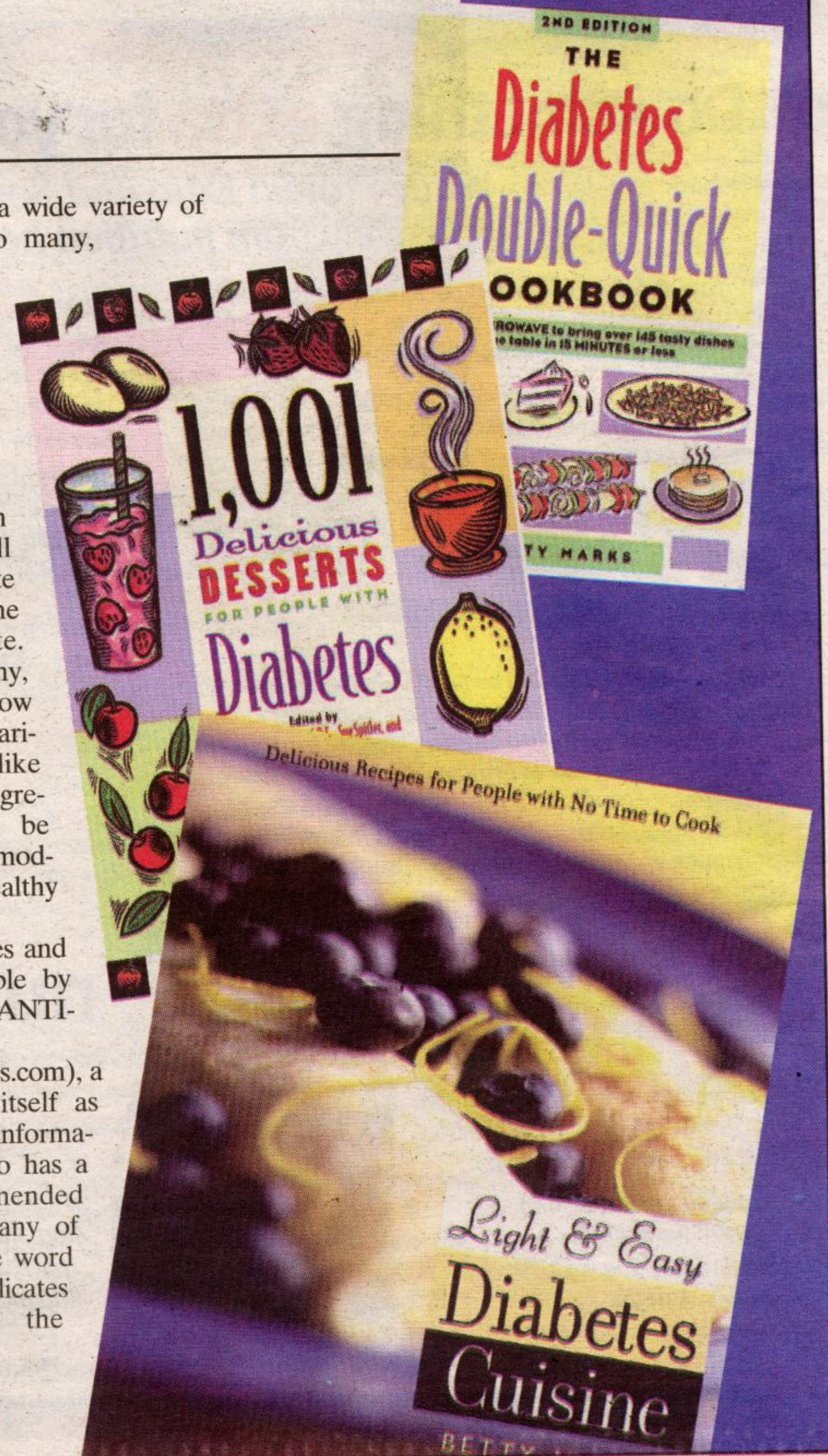
are encouraged to enjoy a wide variety of foods. And, surprising to many,

"added sugars" such as table sugar, honey, jams and jellies and sugar-sweetened products may contribute up to 10 per cent of required calories with no negative effect on blood sugar or fat levels.

"Healthy eating with diabetes now allows all foods to fit," says Pierette Buklis, a dietitian with the Canadian Sugar Institute. "In our efforts to be healthy, we can lose sight of how important it is to enjoy a variety of foods. Foods like snacks and sweets, and ingredients like sugars, can be enjoyed by everyone, in moderation as part of a healthy diet."

Information on diabetes and healthy eating is available by calling the CDA at 800-BANTI-NG.

Sugar Bytes (sugarbytes.com), a website that describes itself as "easy to digest diabetes information for Canadians," also has a lengthy list of recommended cookbooks, including many of the "Choice" books (the word "choice" in the title indicates it's recommended by the CDA) plus others.



The diabetes care internet site at lifescan.com also has a number of links to websites providing diabetic-friendly recipes.