

STORIES OF HOPE

Teaching Kids to Choose a Healthy Lifestyle

Laurie Basloe, diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at age 7, achieved her dream of becoming a professional dancer. She performed with the Richmond Ballet in Richmond, Va., until injuries halted her dance career. During three years with the ballet's outreach program in inner-city schools, Basloe began a transition from arts to education.

"I discovered I had this passion for teaching kids," she recalls.

After being accepted to the New York City Teaching Fellows, Basloe moved to New York City, began master's-degree classes and soon had her own classroom in a Brooklyn grade school. At first, her only mention of diabetes was to inform students of her own need to eat a glucose tablet if her blood glucose was too low. Then, five years ago, a trip to Ecuador to empower youth to help teach children how to manage their diabetes inspired Basloe to begin educating her own school community about diabetes.

She began by hosting a Dance for Diabetes at her school to raise money for the program in Latin American countries.

Basloe knew she had to take action locally when about 80 percent of her predominantly African American fifth-graders said they have a family member with type 2 diabetes, but none knew anything about diabetes. Because diabetes is so prevalent in the community, the school administration gave Basloe permission to develop and teach a unit on the importance of a healthy lifestyle and the basics of type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

During the months prior to the Dance for Diabetes, which raised \$1,000 in 2012, Basloe teaches her students how to use a healthy lifestyle – exercise and smart food choices – to protect against type 2 diabetes. They learn about type 1 diabetes so they know the differences and can educate others.

"As a teacher, I have a huge impact on students' lives," Basloe says. "Teaching them to take care of themselves now could preserve their health in the future."

In 2011, Basloe and her students took third place in national voting in the American Diabetes Association's Share Your Vision to Stop Diabetes® video contest with a video emphasizing that we all know someone affected by diabetes. In recent years, her students also started going into other fourth- and fifth-grade classes to teach their peers about diabetes.

In school and at home, her students gain an invaluable lesson.

"My students know how it feels to help others," Basloe says. "They're sharing what they've learned and encouraging their parents and other family members to make lifestyle changes." ▲

Find Association programs for African Americans at diabetes.org/in-my-community/programs.



Laurie Basloe welcomes students to her Dance for Diabetes.

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