



## Minnesota Lions Diabetes Foundation Update

### **The Importance of Diabetes Research – One Lions’ Story of Living with Diabetes**

Raising funds for diabetes research is a core, and critical, mission of Minnesota Lions Diabetes Foundation (MLDF). Diagnosis of Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes are increasing throughout our population. Support of MLDF by Lions and clubs makes it possible for MLDF to designate funds for research for treatments and MLDF’s ultimate dream – a cure for diabetes. Lion Dave Thoen has lived that dream.

A diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes at age 23 was definitely not in Dave’s life plan. Lion Dave’s story and struggle with certain aspects of Type I Diabetes is similar to many stories. However, after 20 years with diabetes, Lion Dave suffered from severe hypoglycemia unawareness (HU) - the inability to detect low blood sugar. HU is a complication of diabetes suffered by 10% to 15% of people. Its cause is unknown. When someone who lives with Type I diabetes

experiences hypoglycemia, (also known as low blood sugar or insulin reaction), his or her body provides signals such as sweating or shaking to warn that person to treat the low blood sugar.

Lion Dave’s body lost the ability to detect hypoglycemia. He had none of the symptoms, so when his blood sugar was low it often resulted in Lion Dave having many embarrassing and dangerous moments at home, work, and play. He has countless stories of times when his health was in danger, or he was embarrassed by needing help. He experienced unconscious events, seizures, and otherwise “needing help from others”. Lion Dave experienced HU so often that he lost count of the number of times it happened. Fortunately, Lion Dave never seriously hurt himself or others while experiencing HU.

When Lion Dave heard about the University of Minnesota’s islet transplantation program and its claim to cure HU, Lion Dave immediately applied. After a long period of testing Lion Dave’s body, he was deemed a very qualified transplant candidate. He then endured a long wait on the transplant waiting list. Finally, Lion Dave received an islet transplant in December 2008. This transplant, which was followed by another in August 2009.

During the islet transplants, Lion Dave received clusters of cells obtained from a donor’s pancreas and that were inserted into his liver through a small incision. As a result of the transplants, Lion Dave says he, his family, friends and coworkers are enjoying his life being essentially free of diabetes.

For someone with diabetes, a life free of the complications or dangerous health conditions this is very difficult to imagine. Lion Dave not only imagined but has been living the dream for more than 13 years.

### **Catch the Dream**

*As the legend goes, dream catchers were used by Woodland Indians who hung dream catchers in their lodges (near beds) to catch dreams, good or bad. Bad dreams were caught in webbing and would be held until first morning light when they burned off. Good dreams were caught and, knowing the way to the hole in the center of the dream catcher, would filter down into the feathers and be held and return another night.*

Lion Dave caught the dream. His life changed. He no longer lives with complications of diabetes that previously interrupted his life and limited his activities. He became a Lion, and he was asked to serve on the MLDF Board of Trustees. His focus on the value of research directly relates to his wish that others will benefit from research for the prevention, treatment and a cure for diabetes.

Founded by Lions members in 2008, MLDF’s vision dream is to be a part of finding a cure for diabetes. We raise funds and collaborate with partners to conduct research for a cure for Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, provide diabetes education, and sponsor preventative health activities. MLDF has in the past, and will continue in the future, to support the dream - life without diabetes.

As Lion Dave Thoen has completed his terms of service with MLDF to serve in other areas, we thank him for all of his work and commitment to our Foundation and its mission to provide education and support research for a cure.

*Thank you - Lions and Lions Clubs - for your generous and life-changing and life-saving donations. Your support of MLDF is making a difference for countless people across the world, as new treatments are developed and progress toward a cure for diabetes is achieved.*

### **Club Visits and Diabetes Service Projects**

Please contact your trustee(s) to learn more about diabetes and diabetes service projects, and to schedule your club visit (in-person, or virtually).