

# Jay Handy

The founder of the Diabetes and Wellness Foundation is organizing the first diabetes-specific travel trip.



## 1. What is your interest in diabetes?

I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes 29 years ago, and my goal is to focus on what we do now that we've been diagnosed and are waiting for a cure. Basically, that is managing diabetes, making the right choices and becoming physically active. That is what the Diabetes and Wellness Foundation is about. We educate and provide tools and support for people to get off of the couch and to get active.

## 2. What is your involvement in the Diabetes and Wellness Foundation?

I am the founder. The Diabetes and Wellness Foundation came together about 1 year ago. I worked closely with the former Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, Tommy Thompson, and I talked publicly about being active and looking at diet and exercise as a therapy for diabetes. The foundation helps to counsel diabetic patients and helps them get busy. We also partnered with the Presidential Council for Physical Fitness and Sports. They now address the whole country, including adults. I approached them to help them cover the niche of diabetes because diabetic patients need the help of just getting busy.

## 3. What other activities do you do that help diabetic patients lead a healthy lifestyle?

The thing with diabetes is that when you introduce exercise, it adds a new dimension to your blood sugar levels, and you need to go in with your eyes wide open. We are here to say that you can become active, and day-to-day, your life is better. It's more enhanced. You live longer with fewer diabetes complications.

I have been the national head coach for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation for 4 years, getting people in to cycling as a fundraiser. I have discovered when you put a bunch of diabetic patients together, it is powerful. Being a

diabetic is a lone-wolf existence because you manage your condition by yourself. When you get a bunch of folks together who have diabetes, they start exchanging ideas on how they manage their disease. The groupthink becomes more powerful, and I thought, "What if I would take a group of diabetic, have a physically challenging event and have the theme be diet and exercise?"

## 4. What did this thought lead to?

I soon discovered that there has never been a diabetes-specific travel trip. I created the Diabetes Adventure Tours (as a travel arm to the Diabetes and Wellness Foundation) and partnered with Trek Bicycles. We want to fill this trip, and the goal is to do three, four, even five a year. It's putting theory in to action.

Some people look at this trip and think it is a professional cycling trip. That is not the case. It's about the novice: the person who wants to try to embrace an exercise program. I always tell people with diabetes that with exercise and endurance stuff, we have everything to think about that everyone with a functioning pancreas has to think about, but then we have this other layer – carbohydrate intake and insulin levels. It is not insurmountable. Once you get that figured out, you get a new lease on life. There are things that you have to think about when you have diabetes, but you have to think about them while you are being active.

## 5. How has diabetes affected the way you live your life?

I have a phrase that I like to live by: "If you want to live a long healthy life, develop a chronic disease and manage it well." So, what I like to say is that having diabetes does provide blessings. It has made me very sensitive to my body, its abilities and strengths and what encompasses eating correctly. I have never concentrated on its limitations. Diabetes puts the attention on your body and how to keep it healthy. ■

### TRIP DETAILS

- Diabetic patients can bike the area of Girona, Spain, a well-known biking area used by professional cyclists to train for the Grand Tours.
- The 6-day, 5-night adventure runs from October 2 to 7, 2005.
- Cost is \$2,175 and includes hotel accommodations, use of a Trek Madone 5.2 or Trek 7700 FX bicycle, 3 dinners and 3 lunches and snacks.
- Each day a new biking loop will be featured. Longer and shorter loops are designed for avid and leisure cyclists.
- Van support will provide refreshments, a resting place and place to do bike repairs.
- Nightly group discussions will cover topics relevant to the lifestyle of physically active diabetic patients.
- For more information, visit [www.diabetesandwellness.org/dat/index.html](http://www.diabetesandwellness.org/dat/index.html) or call 866-464-8735.