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Quest for a cure: Young diabetic leads charity walk

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Except for the white patch on her arm, there's nothing to suggest 11-year-old Greta Sobol's problems are any

different from those of other kids her age.

But in April last year, Greta was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes, an autoimmune disorder that destroys the body's ability to produce insulin.

Insulin is a naturally produced hormone that helps people convert sugar into energy – but Greta's body can't make it.

Instead, the Niagara-on-the-Lake youngster has to give herself manufactured

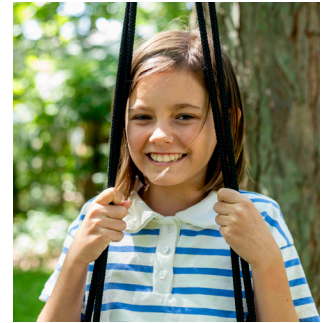
insulin with an injection device.

The diagnosis happened on a Monday night, a few days before Easter weekend 2022.

Earlier in the day, Greta

has some blood work done after several weeks of feeling unwell.

At around midnight, the family received a call: Get Greta to the hospital



Greta Sobol.

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New varieties are bringing an early start to Niagara's peach season

Somer Slobodian
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

New types of peaches are allowing farmers to start the peach season earlier, get more fruit into more homes faster and give people new produce to sink their teeth into.

Thanks to new varieties such as early blush and rising sun, Kai Wiens, a Niagara-on-the-Lake tender fruit farmer, was among those who harvested tasty peaches as early as July 5 this year — his earliest harvest ever.

"With new, earlier varieties now on stream, we are supplying the Ontario market sooner than before," Wiens told The Lake Report via a social media message

Sarah Marshall, board chair of Ontario Tender Fruit, said July 5 is even earlier than when the golden plums are ready, "which is typically thought to be the first thing that really gets harvested."

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Students celebrate first day back

A few tears and lots of excitement as kids start a new school year



Julie Saggars with eight-year-old daughter Lennon McTaggart on her first day back at Crossroads Public School. EVAN LOREE

Evan Loree | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

Here today and gone tomorrow.

The first day back to school in Niagara-on-the-Lake was a whirlwind of activity for parents, teachers and kids alike.

As students disembarked from cars and buses at the busy drop off at Crossroads Public School in Virgil they were met by teachers and support staff, many in highlighter-yellow vests, who

herded them into the school.

Parents Joe Finlayson and Sydney Bellows watched from the parking lot as their twin four-year-olds, Rio and Emme Finlayson, were escorted into the

kindergarten playground for their very first day of school.

Daughter Emme was not so happy to say goodbye, as she

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NOTL tourism sector bouncing back from COVID doldrums

Somer Slobodian
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Despite some bumps in the road, this year's tourist season has exceeded expectations in Niagara-on-

the-Lake, industry representatives say.

The travel sector was one of the hardest hit during the COVID-19 pandemic and some businesses continue to deal with staffing shortages, supply issues and the

slow return of international travellers.

Still, "it's been a strong year" for the historic town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, said Minerva Ward, president of Tourism NOTL and the Niagara-on-the-Lake

Chamber of Commerce.

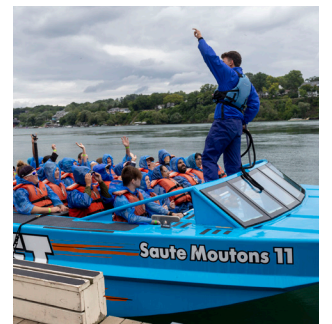
This year's success comes off of a strong 2022 season, she said, adding that last year was one of the best ever for Vintage Hotels.

Kelly Exelby, general manager of the Prince of

Wales hotel, said she believes it has to do with Niagara-on-the-Lake being a quiet, calming destination.

That makes it an ideal spot for those who may be

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Young girl determined to find a cure

Continued from Front Page

immediately.
“Like any parent will tell you, one of your greatest fears is always that your child is unwell,” said her father, Jonathan Sobol.

Receiving the call was “a bit nightmarish,” he said.

Greta remembers being woken up and taken to the St. Catharines hospital, still in her red and black plaid pyjamas.

“Kid, you’ve got diabetes,” she said her dad told her in the car.

Greta was immediately admitted to the pediatric ward and her battle with diabetes began.

A year and a half later, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, she sits between her parents at their kitchen table.

The young diabetic keeps no blood tester close by. There’s no yellow biohazard container for used needles within sight.

Even the strong scent of freshly injected insulin is missing.

Her father drinks coffee on her left, her mom Ann Deuerlein is on her right. Younger sister Eve perches on her mom’s lap.

The family takes turns retelling and sharing Greta’s story.

When first diagnosed, she was injecting herself with needles five times a day, a routine the medical community often refers to as pen therapy.

“If you call it a needle, it sounds worse,” Greta said, pointing out the needles actually are very small.

Today, she uses an Omnipod, an insulin delivery device that attaches to her body and can be controlled through a smartphone to give her insulin throughout the day to help keep her blood sugars in a healthy range.

She also uses a Dexcom device to monitor her blood sugars, eliminating the need for her to draw blood to check.

Greta is this year’s youth ambassador for Sun Life’s annual Walk to Cure Diabetes, a fundraiser for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

The walk starts at 10 a.m.



Greta Sobol has been living with juvenile diabetes for almost two years. She hopes to raise awareness of the life-long illness and is leading NOTL’s Walk to Cure Diabetes. EVAN LOREE

at the Virgil sports complex in Niagara-on-the-Lake on Sunday, Sept. 10.

Her parents are co-chairing the charity drive and, in addition to fundraising for a cure, Greta’s dad says the organization helps people connect with a wider community touched by juvenile diabetes.

Greta says she has made a few friends through the research foundation, including NOTL’s Maya Webster, who was last year’s ambassador.

“Like any parent will tell you, one of your greatest fears is always that your child is unwell.”

JONATHAN SOBOL
GRETA’S DAD

It’s easier to make friends with people at the foundation’s events because they have something to talk about.

“You’re just like, ‘Wow, they are exactly like me. They know what I’m going through,’ ” she said.

With the research foundation’s community supporting her, Greta is looking to “give back” with this year’s run.

In the weeks leading up to her diagnosis, she remembers being thirsty, tired and sad.

Greta said no one noticed how often she excused herself to drink from the school fountain.

It’s the exhaustion that

stands out the most for her, though.

“I didn’t know why. I would just be like, ‘Mom, I’m sad and I don’t know why,’ and I would just start, like, crying my eyes out.”

Deuerlein takes the occasional break to wipe away a tear. She says the community was an instrumental support when she was “swimming in the amount of new information” that came with her daughter’s diagnosis.

Greta was experiencing hyperglycemia, which means that her blood had too much sugar in it.

It’s what happens when a diabetic takes in too much sugar and not enough insulin and some of the most common symptoms of hyperglycemia are thirst, fatigue and irritability.

If it goes on long enough, a diabetic person will lose weight because they are unable to convert sugar into energy.

As the sugar builds up in the body, they will attempt to dispose of the extra sugar through urination.

This is why diabetic people with high blood sugars become thirsty: the body is attempting to get rid of excess sugar.

If that lasts too long, it can trigger a coma called diabetic ketoacidosis.

For a while, Deuerlein thought her daughter was going through depression, or some mid-pandemic blues.

It was unlike their normally sociable and spunky nine-year-old to be so tired and irritable all the time.

The parents weren’t sure what was going on,

but Greta’s grandmother suggested she looked thinner during a visit to her home one weekend in early April.

That’s when Deuerlein started to wonder about diabetes.

The next Monday, Greta’s parents took her to a Life Labs in NOTL for blood work. By the end of that day, she would be at the hospital.

Normal blood sugar readings are between four and eight millimoles per litre. At the hospital that night, Greta’s was more than 30.

She misses the days when she could play dodgeball at school without interruption.

Exercise causes blood sugars to drop and low blood sugar is dangerous for a diabetic. When sugars get too low, juvenile diabetics are at risk of going into hypoglycemic shock.

At its worst, a low blood sugar can result in seizures and hospitalization.

“My hands get all shaky, and I get really sweaty and tired,” Greta said.

Sometimes Greta thinks the whole disease is just a “bad dream” and maybe she’ll wake up.

Meanwhile, she’s confidently waiting on a cure.

“It will go away. It just might take longer than I hoped it would,” she said.

And if it doesn’t come, she says she’ll find one herself.

People interested in volunteering for or sponsoring the walk this Sunday can contact Deuerlein at annJDRFwalk@gmail.com.

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