

Slam Dunk for Diabetes – Our Story

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Slam Dunk for Diabetes began with a spark of an idea fueled by the belief that all children with diabetes deserve the opportunity to participate in fun and meaningful activities related to their diabetes. There are many children throughout the country without resources. Slam Dunk is a one of a kind diabetes educational experience that creatively provides learning opportunities targeting children and families who often lack these activities and resources.

A chance conversation in 2003 when a friend, whose husband is on the Board of Directors for the Chicago Bulls, facilitated the first Slam Dunk Camp in inner city Chicago in 2004. She knew all too well the challenges of managing diabetes and felt strongly that had she experienced education opportunities that were meaningful she may have prevented the complications she was experiencing.

For the past 14 years, Slam Dunk has been educating and motivating children with diabetes, 5 to 18 years old to take better care of their diabetes. Its mission is to build self-awareness, confidence, knowledge and skill in self-management while at the same time illustrating to children and their families that they are not alone, and they can live healthy, productive lives.

Time between drills and games is spent in “teachable moments” where blood glucose test results and response to physical activity, food and exercise are integrated into problem solving discussions. During these experiential teaching moments children learn the relationship between activity and blood glucose levels and quickly adapt new behaviors because they are motivated to “get back in the game”. Just as important is the friendships and bonds formed and the inspiration by each other’s abilities, attitudes and coping skills.

Over the years Slam Dunk has expanded to 5 cities and now includes children with type 2 diabetes and prediabetes. No child is turned away.

Slam Dunk camps have proven themselves to help kids with diabetes learn to become self-managers of their diabetes, build confidence and promote emotional well-being. Slam Dunk parent surveys show that nearly 50% of kids attending Slam Dunk camp are more confident in their ability to participate in sports without hypoglycemia. One out of four children actually increase their activity level and sports participation after attending camp. Fewer hypoglycemia reactions were reported after attending camp in over 36% of campers. Two out of three children improved their confidence and ability to manage their own diabetes as a result of attending camp.

Slam Dunk for Diabetes is small in size but big on achievement. Slam Dunk has received four national awards. The most recent award (August, 2017) Innovation in Media and Technology for the video *Exercising Safely with Diabetes* was awarded by AADE. This one of a kind interactive and animated video teaches children and young adults the basics of preventing and treating hypoglycemia during and after exercise.

Slam Dunk for Diabetes hopes to expand and offer this unique opportunity to children with diabetes in underserved communities throughout the United States.

Slam Dunk
By Monica Joyce

Early morning, shining floors
The darkness soothes me
The quiet speaks to me

Smiling faces; laughter
Hoops that beckon the challenge
Make a basket; bask in the glory
Miss and try again.

Smiling faces; helping hands.
Try again; don't give up
Move quickly; knowingly
Make a pass; someone there to help.
Dedicated to the Slam Dunk Kids
Work as a team

Find a path
Take a shot; make it count
Test yourself; accept the challenge
Try again and again
Never give up
You're a winner

Dedicated to the Slam Dunk Kids