

# We Can Learn a Lot from Children

*Degree of Honor member Brittni Neujahr was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when she was 10-years old. She is now 12 and her example is an inspiration to others— young and old—who face this difficult challenge.*

## **How did you and your parents react to the diagnosis?**

At first we were shocked. We knew there was no cure and we were scared. But my doctor was really nice and calmed us down. "Brittni, there are two things you cannot do," he said. "You can't drive an 18-wheeler and you can't be in the military. Otherwise you can do anything you want to do." I looked at him and said, "I didn't want to do those things anyways!"

## **How has diabetes changed your life?**

It changed some things, but not everything! I decided to have a positive attitude and I knew I had to be responsible. I got used to the routine of checking my blood sugar and giving myself insulin shots. The shots were hard at first, but pretty soon they didn't even bother me. Now I use an insulin pump; that's even easier and it gives me more freedom. I still do all the things I've always done – go swimming with friends, ride my bike, go on overnights, eat when I want to and take acting lessons. Diabetes is not on my mind all the time.

## **What advice would you give to a young person diagnosed with diabetes?**

You'll live through it. You'll learn to manage it and things will get easier. It's not like you're different. If you have good friends, no one will treat you differently.

## **What advice would you give to parents of a child who has diabetes?**

Be there for your child, but don't worry all the time. Help your child manage things, especially for the first couple of months. It's okay to nag a little. Once you know that your child is being responsible with their diet and insulin, let go a little.

## Reaching out to help

Challenged with type 1 diabetes, 12-year-old Brittni Neujahr helps others who face this disease. Through her school district's nurse, she has mentored younger children with type 1 diabetes, and also raised funds to fight juvenile diabetes by joining her family in a Walk for a Cure. "I've learned a lot about diabetes and maybe I'll go into medicine someday. It would be neat to help kids deal with diabetes!" she says.