Great granddad from Kent swims 22 miles for Diabetes UK

Wednesday 3 February, 2016

A great granddad from Ashford is swimming 22 miles – the equivalent of swimming the English Channel – to raise funds for Diabetes UK.

The Swim22 challenge gives swimmers three months to swim 22 miles in their local pool, either by themselves or by splitting the distance with teammates.

Len Bunn (70) a parish clerk at Kingsnorth Parish Council, is taking part in Swim 22 because he has Type 2 diabetes.

Len said: “Diabetes UK have always been very supportive of me so I'd like to raise over £2000 to help research into a cure. I have also decided that I will complete the 22 miles using backstroke, which makes it more of a challenge for me. I love a challenge.

“I normally swim five days a week and complete 1770 lengths of the indoor pool at the Ashford International Hotel. But my training is not just in the water but in the gym where I complete around three miles a session on the treadmill.

After my diagnosis I was unable to walk unaided due to my diabetes and being unable to work for 10 years as I was unable to stand. My weight ballooned at an alarming rate so had a gastric bypass which resulted in me no longer having to manage my diabetes but was warned that it may come back, which it did, but is now controlled by tablets only.

“Once I managed to walk again, I then started working part time in local politics and after working this part time job for 4 months I was offered a full time position. The operation resulted in me losing 12 stones and being able to wear 'proper clothes' which I hadn't been able to do since being a school child.

“In 2014 & 2015 I was awarded the cup as the oldest dipper in town when I completed the Boxing Day Dip at Folkestone.”

The challenge will take place between 22 February and 22 May 2016.

Laura Crow, Diabetes UK Fundraising Manager, said: “We are delighted that Len will be diving into the pool and making a splash for Diabetes UK, and look forward to following his progress throughout the challenge.

“We hope Len's commitment will inspire others in Kent to take the plunge for Diabetes UK. The three-month timeframe means that whatever your fitness level there's plenty of time to get in the pool, and you can even split the distance with teammates if that feels more manageable.

“Swim22 is perfect for anyone who wants to challenge themselves to get fitter and to keep physically active, in turn helping them to maintain a healthy weight, which also helps prevent Type 2 diabetes. People with diabetes can also help manage their condition through getting plenty of exercise and eating healthily.”

If Len has inspired you to take on this challenge, sign up for Swim 22 now at www.diabetes.org.uk/swim22. There is no closing date, so you can sign up anytime so long as you complete the challenge by 22 May 2016.

To sponsor Len visit www.justgiving.com/Len-Bunn and to find out more about Swim22 visit www.diabetes.org.uk/swim22

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For further media information please contact Insert contact on insert number or the Diabetes UK Media Relations Team on **020 7424 1165** or email pressteam@diabetes.org.uk

For urgent out of hours media enquiries only please call **07711 176028**. ISDN facilities available.

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- **1**Diabetes UK is the leading UK charity that cares for, connects with and campaigns on behalf of all people affected by and at risk of diabetes. For more information on all aspects of diabetes and access to Diabetes UK activities and services, visit www.diabetes.org.uk
- **2**In the UK, 3.5 million people are diagnosed with diabetes. In addition, there are 549,000 people who have Type 2 diabetes but don't know they have it because they haven't been diagnosed. 11.9 million people are at increased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and if current trends continue, an estimated 5 million people will have diabetes by 2025.
- **3**Diabetes is a condition where there is too much glucose in the blood because the body cannot use it properly. If not managed well, both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes can lead to devastating complications. Diabetes is the leading cause of preventable sight loss in people of working age in the UK and is a major cause of lower limb amputation, kidney failure and stroke.
- **4**People with **Type 1 diabetes** cannot produce insulin. About 10 per cent of people with diabetes have Type 1. No one knows exactly what causes it, but it's not to do with being overweight and it isn't currently preventable. It usually affects children or young adults, starting suddenly and getting worse quickly. Type 1 diabetes is treated by daily insulin doses - taken either by injections or via an insulin pump. It is also recommended to follow a healthy diet and take regular physical activity
- **5**People with **Type 2 diabetes** don't produce enough insulin or the insulin they produce doesn't work properly (known as insulin resistance). 85 to 90 per cent of people with diabetes have Type 2. They might get Type 2 diabetes because of their family history, age and ethnic background puts them at increased risk. They are also more likely to get Type 2 diabetes if they are overweight. It starts gradually, usually later in life, and it can be years before they realise they have it. Type 2 diabetes is treated with a healthy diet and increased physical activity. In addition, tablets and/or insulin can be required.
- **6**For more information on reporting on diabetes, download our journalists' guide: http://www.diabetes.org.uk/Global/Homepage/News/Journalists_Guidance_Update_2015.pdf

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