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Tammy Green

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# Summer: A Sweet Time of Reflection

**Tammy Green, RN, BSN, Georgia**

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I work in a private school which serves preschool through 12th grade. Like my school, many private, parochial, non-public charter, and tribal schools serve students of different academic divisions on a single campus. As I sit here today, I reflect on the many opportunities to care for my students and the relationships I've built in this private school setting. In reflection, many students come to mind; however, I have been blessed with many fond memories of students who have come through my clinic with insulin-dependent diabetes.

Caring for students with diabetes has been heartwarming and truly enriching to my spirit; some of my students have been with me from preschool through 12th grade. "All students with type 1 diabetes (juvenile diabetes) need a strong support network at school to help them properly manage their type 1 diabetes on a daily basis. Cultivating good relationships with school staff is key" (Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International [JDRF], 2010a). This is achieved by frequently acknowledging each student's individuality and plan of care. Open communication is key to understanding and reaching short- and long-term goals. The most common goal among families is finding a cure. When I was asked to participate in our first school-wide JDRF fundraiser

5 years ago, I would never have thought that we would work so hard, make a huge impact on so many along the way, and raise over \$100,000. When asked to speak to parents, guardians, relatives, and friends of students newly diagnosed with diabetes, I was immediately inundated with mixed feelings. I have learned over the years that "life with type 1 diabetes poses challenges for every member of the family and it may take years to adapt to the day-to-day demands of the disease" (JDRF, 2010b). As a school nurse, I am always touched by the resilience of these students and their families. I truly admire our students' sense of compassion and their ability to carry on with their daily activities without letting obstacles, such as lack of sleep, glucose changes due to stress, hormonal imbalances, onset of a virus, and hypoglycemic and/or hyperglycemic episodes get in their way. Somehow, in spite of all that, they always seem to have an inner smile. How could I not welcome them each day when they come in with a smile?

Over the past 2 years, I have returned to school with a newly diagnosed diabetic student who I eagerly embrace as they embark on their new experience by checking their blood sugar, adjusting their corrections accordingly, and continuing on with the day's events. Watching the students care for their diabetes is like beautiful music; their careful coordination of glucose levels, activities,

and nutrition is like a well-composed symphony.

Summertime is a sweet time of reflection for me and can be for you. Are you taking the time to contemplate what may be lying ahead for you? Is there a special group of students for you? Many of us are participating in summer school, camps, and the registration process for the new school year, but somehow we may still find the time to collect our thoughts and look ahead toward another rewarding school year. What challenges will lay ahead for you once school begins? ■

## References

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### **Tammy Green, RN, BSN**

*Holy Innocents' Episcopal School  
Atlanta, GA*

Tammy has been a school nurse at Holy Innocents' Episcopal School for 11 years, serving preschool through 12th-grade students. She is also the current PPSN Chair.