

Darcy Trego; Controlling Diabetes for Life

By Justin Phillips

Native Americans and diabetes.

The two seem to go hand in hand.

Today, diabetes has reached epidemic proportions among Native Americans. Complications from diabetes are major causes of death and health problems in most Native American populations.

Diabetes is a disease that affects the body's ability to produce or respond to insulin. Insulin is a hormone that allows blood glucose (blood sugar) to enter the cells of the body and be used for energy.

Diabetes falls into two main categories: Type I, which usually occurs during childhood or adolescence and Type II, the most common form of the disease, usually occurring after the age 40.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that has *no cure*.

The Tribe has hired Darcy Trego, Nutrition and Diabetes Educator to help assist Tribal members who have been diagnosed with diabetes.

A Roseburg native, Trego now resides in the coastal community of Newport. She drives about 50 miles a day to work.

"People do crazy things to live on the coast," said Trego.

Trego graduated from Portland's Marlyhurst College with a Bachelor's degree in Home Economics. Upon graduation she attended Oregon State University to study to be a dietician.

She worked with the Indian Health Board Clinic in Minneapolis after her internship.

"That allowed me to do dietician stuff without having to work in a hospital," said Trego. "That really wet my appetite for public health."

She then went back to the University of Minnesota and received her Master's degree in Public Health. Trego then lived in Minnesota for about 12 years before moving back to Oregon in 1990.

Trego is a Certified Diabetes Educator.

"I teach people enough about their diabetes so they can have a life as close as they were living prior to diabetes," said Trego. "The real key to having a long and healthy life with diabetes is knowing as much as you can about it. The more you know about it, the less likely you are to get the complications that are associated with it."

The serious complications of diabetes are increasing in frequency among Native Americans. Of major concern are increasing rates of kidney failures, amputations and blindness.

New program offered to clients.



Photo by Justin Phillips

Educator/Lifesaver — The Tribe's new Nutrition and Diabetes Educator Darcy Trego has personal experience with the heartache of diabetes. Now, she devotes herself to educating people about the deadly disease and has brought her wisdom and experience to the people of the Grand Ronde community. Trego is available at the clinic on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Ten to 21 percent of all people with diabetes develop kidney disease. Among people with diabetes, the rate of diabetic end stage renal disease is six times higher among Native Americans.

"For every one person we know that has diabetes, there are probably three out there that haven't been diagnosed," said Trego. "It's a huge effort to try to get those people identified so that they can be treated. People can have diabetes and feel ok. The big symptoms are excess thirst, urination and blurred vision."

Each year 54,000 people lose one of their feet or one of their legs to diabetes. Amputation rates among Native Americans are three to four times higher than the general population.

Trego lost her mother due to diabetes complications.

"She knew how to take care of herself," said Trego. "The difference is the technology we have today with the self monitoring of the glucose and the car-

bohydrate counting. She didn't have those tools. If she were diagnosed with diabetes today, there would be no reason for her to die of renal failure."

Trego said she is excited about the technology today.

"The things we heard of our parents or grandparents dying of diabetes complications doesn't have to happen anymore," said Trego.

Once a person is diagnosed with diabetes, Trego interviews them and tries to find out what their knowledge of diabetes is and what stage they are in.

She teaches people about the benefits of exercising regularly and to just about anything from adjusting their diet to adjusting their medication to level things out.

"Exercise and weight are two things we have a lot of control over in terms of getting blood sugar under control," said Trego.

Bonnie Tom, Wellness Manager, thinks having Trego here is great.

"We were really excited to get her because of the amount of people we have with diabetes and also the people we have that are high risk for diabetes that want to lose weight," said Tom. "So what Darcy is doing is providing nutrition education to them."

Taking control of diabetes has many benefits. Keeping your blood sugar levels in the normal range can make a big difference now and in the future.

When not working, Trego enjoys gardening, skiing and reading.

Trego has two children — Eric a freshman at Montana State University and Barbara who is a sophomore at Newport High School. She loves to spend time with them and watch them when they are involved in sports.

Trego works at the Grand Ronde clinic on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 to 5 p.m. In the mornings she teaches a food class at Nestucca High School and on Wednesday afternoons she teaches an osteoporosis prevention class and a weight loss program called *The Solution*.

If you or someone you know has diabetes or think that they may have symptoms, call your local physician and get it checked out. For those of you diagnosed, call Egypt Powley at 503-879-2078 to schedule an appointment with Trego today.

Life is short. Don't make it any shorter.



Facilitator Jillene Joseph talks about how chlamydia affects the body and how to prevent it.

Tribal member Nathan Mueller (at right) shows off his new camera, just one of the many prizes given away to participants.



Photos by Justin Phillips

"RISKY BUSINESS" — The Northwest Tribal Council Control Project of the Northwest Indian Health Board and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde hosted a seminar called "Risky Business" at Spirit Mountain Casino on March 27. People of all ages attended the seminar, although it was primarily focused on youth in 4th-12th grades. People who work with youth were also encouraged to attend.

The participants learned how many risky behaviors are interrelated, specifically: cancer, addictive tobacco use and sexually transmitted diseases (STD's).

"Overall, it went very well," said Peggy Biery, Project Specialist from the Northwest Tribal Cancer Control Project. "Both the youth and staff participated in all the activities. The more knowledge that people have in the community the better. It was good to see the youth and staff interact with each other on such issues."