

My name is Katie Clark – most people know me as Ellie Clark’s mom. Ellie will be five next month. She is a sweet little girl, who has been barraged since birth with complete strangers touching her blond curly hair. We thought that was going to be her burden to bear. We were wrong.

Ellie was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes last year. To be exact, we found out at 4:45 p.m. on August 30th. We had spent weeks denying the symptoms. And with those words every parent here today will tell you devastated them, “there is glucose in her urine”, our lives were turned upside down. She was diagnosed on what was supposed to be her first day at a new preschool. We spent my 30th birthday at the hospital and got through the denial in a few hours which most would say is really fast. I spent a better part of the next two weeks in a depression. I was also so very angry. Anger is not the most common emotion at the beginning; however, we are not new to the disease. I have had juvenile diabetes for 28 years.

It’s only been 10 months. Ellie has calluses on her fingers. Her bottom has scar tissue from her insulin pump sites. She’s had 1494 finger pricks. Her blood has been drawn five times with two nurses holding her down and one drawing the blood. She’s had 98 pump site changes. It’s only been 10 months. All I want is to give her back the life she was living before August 30th and a future brighter than one clouded by diabetes. I would give everything I have, even my own life, for Ellie not to have to endure another day of this dreadful disease.

One of the hardest things for me is knowing first hand of the challenges that Ellie will face as she grows up. 15 years. That is how much less of an average life span Ellie and I have been dealt. And diabetes is something that affects every detail of every day of your life. It’s not only about the finger pokes or the worry about whether you have enough supplies or when my next meal will be. The happiest days of my life have been affected – details the average person wouldn’t think about. I had an insulin reaction on my wedding day and not only did my hair that I had just gotten styled get messed up, but I ended up with orange juice on my veil. For each of my pregnancies, I saw my high-risk pregnancy OB once a week and in the months leading up to their births, I saw the doctors twice a week. In labor I was forced to check blood sugars every hour, and after birth the nurses whisked my newborns away to check their blood sugars and force a tube down their throat to get glucose into their stomach because their little bodies

were used to producing too much insulin. This is not the life I dream of for my precious daughter.

The worst part of diabetes and the biggest impact it has had on my life is when Ellie is getting tucked into bed at night. That is when she asks the questions that are unanswerable like “Mommy, why do some people get diabetes and some people don’t?” Or she says things like “Daddy, I don’t want diabetes anymore”. This is when I realize that we must do everything we can to find a cure for this disease. My sweet little girl with the blond curls deserves it.