My son Dylan George and his buddy Parker Davis have been best friends for almost 10 years now. They both have a passion for baseball which started around age 5 when they were introduced to T-Ball together. What you won’t know by looking at them is that both Dylan and Parker have Type 1 Diabetes (T1D). Type 1 Diabetes is a chronic, life-threatening autoimmune disease in which a person’s pancreas produces little to no insulin. Insulin is a hormone needed in order to get energy from food. T1D can occur at any age but is usually diagnosed from infancy to the late thirties and lasts a lifetime. Type 1 Diabetes has nothing to do with diet or lifestyle, is not preventable, and requires insulin dependency for life. Although T1D’s causes are not entirely known, scientists believe that both genetic factors and environmental triggers play a role. Both Dylan and Parker were diagnosed as toddlers and are now in middle school.

Living with T1D is a constant balancing act. Children and adults with T1D must regularly monitor their blood-sugar level with 6-8 finger pricks daily, inject or continually infuse insulin through a pump, and carefully balance their insulin doses with eating and daily activities throughout the day and night. Exercise can be challenging and calls for constant monitoring before, during, and after physical activity in order to avoid a low blood sugar.

Although exercise can be challenging for the boys at times, Type 1 Diabetes does not stop Dylan or Parker from living a full life and pursuing their passion for the love of baseball.

Currently, both boys play for The Corona Reds 14U Baseball Team which is a high school prep team that practices at Santiago High School. Ryan Highstreet is their Coach and had this to say about the boys:
“Both Dylan and Parker are two of the top athletes in our program. Along with being very athletic, they have tremendous talent on the baseball field. Dylan is an outfielder and Parker plays primarily shortstop and second base. Both boys hit at the top of the batting order.”

“Parker has been a member of our program for 3 years. When he first started playing with us, the extent of my knowledge of Diabetes was limited. I was not aware of the different types of diabetes and how it truly impacts a person’s life. During his first practices, I noticed Shannon, Parker’s mom, always asking him how he was feeling and checking his levels. She often reminded me that he had “Type 1 Diabetes.” This is when I decided to do some research of my own so I could have a better understanding. I realized how serious Type 1 Diabetes is and I became concerned with keeping him safe. I started asking him, “Are you ok? Levels good?” (Maybe a little too much) He always responded, “Yes coach” with a smile on his face. I think he may have thought I was probably joking with him about it, but I was just so nervous and wanted to make sure he was ok.”

“Dylan has been in our program for about 5 months now. He was much more reserved about Diabetes than Parker. There has been a few instances during a game where his levels have been high. But Dylan had a drive to battle through it and keep competing even though he may not be feeling well.”

“Players in our program are aware of what Parker and Dylan are enduring and are very supportive. I sometimes hear the players in the dugout asking both boys if they are feeling ok and if they need anything. It is a really great thing to see young men at this age have the understanding and the wherewithal to know what Type 1 Diabetes is and be supportive of their friends. A number of the teammates and their parents showed their support by attending a Type 1 Diabetes fundraiser that helped spread knowledge about this condition.”

“A future on the baseball field is very bright for both of these players. I believe that having Type 1 Diabetes and the things these boys encounter on a daily basis have forced both of them to grow up a little quicker than they should have. They have a better understanding of how their bodies work and a personal responsibility to keep themselves healthy.”

We are so grateful to Coach Highstreet for being proactive and taking it upon himself to learn more about Type 1 Diabetes and appreciate his efforts in ensuring the safety of our boys.

Coach Highstreet recently invited both Dylan and Parker to be a part of the Corona Reds 14U Team that will be participating in the USA Baseball National Team Championships which is formerly known as the Junior Olympics. This program is designed to provide National Team athlete development opportunities to youth baseball players across the country. My husband Dave and I could not be more proud of our son Dylan, as well as Parker’s parents, Mike and Shannon.

I encourage all children and adults to live their lives to the fullest and don’t let Type 1 Diabetes stop you from fulfilling your dreams. We look forward to a bright future ahead for both boys and hope that they can be an inspiration to others.