

'It starts with us' – inspiring young people living with diabetes

This week, thousands of young Victorians will celebrate National Youth Week (10–19 April); inspiring their fellow peers to get active and involved within their community under the theme 'It starts with us'.

"National Youth Week is a wonderful opportunity to empower young people living with diabetes to live active lives and follow their dreams", says Diabetes Victoria CEO Craig Bennett.

"Our goal is to help shape positive role models – be it through the Young Leaders in Diabetes (YLD) Program, our diabetes camps and peer support groups, or the many workshops and education programs we provide specifically designed to meet the needs of young people living with diabetes."

25 year-old Ashley Ng from Chelsea has been heavily involved in the YLD Program.

"My passion lies in healthcare education and making knowledge easily available and accessible to those who need it", says Ashley who has started a Facebook support group for young adults with type 2 diabetes and regularly blogs at bittersweetdiagnosis.com.

"I, personally, have felt extremely frustrated and dumbfounded at some of the things I have been told that I can or cannot have or access. And I have spoken to many unsettled young adults who feel like their life is burdened with diabetes", Ashley says.

It can take quite some time to digest such a life-changing diagnosis. YLD-member Andrew Collister learned that he has type 1 diabetes when he was 15 years old. The 23 year-old from Glen Iris says it took him many years to settle into his life with diabetes.

For the first four years after his diagnosis Andrew had not met anyone his age with diabetes. Once introduced he learned that he was not alone and there is a big community of young people living with diabetes who are more than willing to share their experiences and offer advice.

Andrew's passion is to let young people living with diabetes know that the condition doesn't stop them from doing anything they set their minds to. "Despite having lived with diabetes for nearly eight years now I go out, I drink, I've backpacked three times to Europe and once to the USA and will do both again at the end of this year", Andrew says, believing that the 'It starts with you' is just as important as the 'It starts with us'.

Diabetes Victoria is the leading charity and peak consumer body working to reduce the impact of diabetes.

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