

Henson involves family, business in diabetes fight

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT **VAL HENSON**

Age: 46

Residence: Middletown

Job: Owner, Henson Construction LLC

Family: Wife, Diane; children, Lauren, 20, Meredith, 16, and Clare, 14

Volunteer organization: Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International, Kentuckiana chapter

Within a span of eight months, Val Henson was dealt the devastating news that not one, but all three, of his daughters were diagnosed with juvenile diabetes.

Neither Henson nor his wife, Diane Henson, have diabetes, although others on both sides of their family have Type 1 diabetes.

The Hensons, who were living in Cincinnati at the time, suddenly found themselves dealing with insulin shots, dietary restrictions and the fear that a quick drop in blood-sugar levels could snatch the life of one their children.

But with the misfortune, came the desire to do their part in the search for the cure. The couple became involved with the Cincinnati chapter of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International, serving on the board and participating in walk-a-thons and other fund-raisers.

Their work carried over to the local chapter when the Hensons moved to Louisville in 1995. Then, eight years ago, the Hensons stepped up their support of juvenile diabetes research after

a severe insulin reaction almost took the life of their youngest daughter, Clare Henson, now 14.

Their other daughters are Meredith, 16, and Lauren, 20.

Val Henson, an avid sports fan, organized a sports trivia luncheon that initially raised about \$8,000. The next spring, he attracted professional baseball player Jim "Mudcat" Grant to a dinner event and raised \$44,000.

Now an annual fund-raiser known as the JDRF Sports Memorabilia and Trivia Night, the event has raised more than \$500,000. It continues to be Henson's pet project, and he regularly takes time out from his construction business to solicit corporate support, recruit sports celebrities and secure autographed merchandise for an auction. The next one will be held in May.

Both Henson and his wife supported the recent Greater Louisville Walk to Cure Diabetes, and daughter Clare helped kick off the event with other members of the Assumption High School dance team who performed before the walk.

In addition, a walk team from Henson's business, Henson Construction LLC, participated in the event.

"I have three beautiful daughters," he said, his voice cracking from emotion. "I want to do everything I can to find the cure, so they don't have to live with (juvenile diabetes) anymore." |