

## CARE KITS

# Utica High School senior aims to help children cope with diabetes

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Contributing Writer

A Macomb County student has come up with an idea to help young children diagnosed with diabetes.

Utica High School senior Carina Willcock, of Shelby Township, has created a project that will help children understand diabetes and offer comfort in knowing they're not alone.

She is currently working on a care kit for young children with the disease. The kits will include a storybook about a diabetic panther and a stuffed animal, which will also be a panther.

"I have been a Type 1 diabetic since I was 22 months old," Willcock said. "I had to have insulin every day, shots every day."

One of the things that helped Willcock understand and accept her disease was something given to her by her great aunt.

"She made me a stuffed bear with a port like I had," she said. "The bear had a 'C' on its chest so I named it 'C'-Bear. I was not very creative as a 4-year-old."

Her parents would demonstrate infusions on the bear's tummy to show Carina how it was done.

"The demonstrations gave me courage," she said. "Being able to see something else have the same thing, I was more willing to try."

Willcock got the idea for the kits following a school project involving 24 hours of community service.

"Our teacher told us to make it something close and personal to us and I came up with this idea," she said.

Using her artistic skills, she is writing and illustrating a book about a young panther with diabetes and how he deals with the disease.

"I chose a black panther as the main character because they symbolize strength and triumph," Willcock said. "He's scared of the pump at first but learns what he needs to do to take care of himself. He learns he can do everything normal kids can do."

The stuffed panther included in the care kit will come with an insulin pump that can be used for demonstrations and practice.

"It's scary and I want (children) to know it's okay to be upset and angry because it's a rough thing to deal with," she said. "But it doesn't make you less capable of anything."

Willcock has begun a GoFundMe page to raise money for the care kits. Once she reaches her funding goal, she hopes to have the kits available for children at Royal Oak Beaumont Hospital by the end of May.

"I've been going to Royal Oak Beaumont for appointments since being diagnosed, so I contacted them with my idea and they were very supportive," she said.

With the money raised through the GoFundMe site, Willcock says she will produce as many care kits



PHOTO COURTESY OF CARINA WILLCOCK

Utica High School senior Carina Willcock, of Shelby Township, is working on creating care kits for young children who have diabetes to let them know they are not alone.

as she can. Her long-term goal is to keep the project going.

"As long as there's money, I will keep doing it," she said. "This is all free of charge for the kids. I don't want any money from this."

Those who would like to support Willcock's endeavor can do so by visiting [gofundme.com](http://gofundme.com) and searching "kits for kids: diabetic care kit."

## More on diabetes

According to [diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org), only 5 percent of people diagnosed with diabetes have Type 1. It's most commonly diagnosed in children.

With Type 1, the body does not produce insulin

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that is used to break down sugars, specifically glucose, which is used for energy.

The more common form of diabetes is Type 2. Also known as hyperglycemia, it means your body is not using insulin properly and causes higher than normal glucose levels.

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