



NICK MESSINA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Members of Fair Lawn High School Juvenile Diabetes Awareness Club sell teddy bears and plush dogs donated by Russ Berrie to raise money to send a child with diabetes to Camp Nejeda. Club members Jenna Moore (front, from left), Sarah Heber, Tracy Eisser, Sarah Yourman, are joined by school nurses Barbara Rochford (back, from left) and Kelly Fontana.

INDEX

BUSINESS	28	OPINION	14
CLASSIFIEDS	57	PHOTO ALBUM	36
DINING OUT	44	POLICE BEAT	38
FAMILY	30	PUZZLE	31
GOOD TIMES	43	REAL ESTATE	52
OBITUARIES	40	SPORTS	48

INSIDE**Spring musical schedules**

Local high schools are gearing up for this year's spring musicals and plays. **3**

**Wrestling for states**

Young wrestlers battle for chance to make it to this season's kids' state championships. **48**

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HS club raises awareness, funds for diabetes

BY TRACEY A. PUTRINO
Staff Writer

FAIR LAWN – Sarah Yourman has had fun at Camp Neveda for six summers and wants another child with diabetes to have the same experience.

The 14-year-old freshman turned to her friends and created the Juvenile Diabetes Awareness Club (JDAC) at Fair Lawn High School on a mission to raise funds.

"The club thought it was important to provide this great experience to at least one child who could not otherwise afford to attend," said Yourman, who also has Cystic Fibrosis.

After selling baked goods, wrapping paper and candy earlier this year, the group's latest fund-raiser was selling plush bears and dogs for Valentine's Day that were donated by Russ Berrie and Co.

Yourman wrote to the company explaining the club's goal and asked for its support. Russ Berrie and Co., whose late founder had diabetes, responded with 96 plush animals.

Each stuffed animal features a handmade label that states, "With the purchase of this bear JDAC will help send a child to diabetes camp." The club hopes to raise the \$1,700 needed to sponsor a camper for a two-week session.

"It is wonderful community spirit for friends to get together to help another friend afflicted with a life-threatening disease and help her spread the word about a cause close to her heart," freshman Tracy Eisser said.

The new club includes five freshmen and senior Cassie Bodzak, who is Yourman's peer mentor for her freshmen year.

SEE CLUB, PAGE 39

CLUB

FROM PAGE 1

"She hit the ground running in high school," said Lisa Yourman, her mom.

School Nurse Barbara Rochford, who serves as the faculty advisor, said the idea for the club came from Yourman because she wanted to make other students aware and to help those with diabetes.

"She is educating the other people in the club and then passing it on to the community," said Carol Simms, who works in Camp Neveda's health center.

"We are just so proud of this group," said Rochford, who is assisted by School Nurse Kelly Fontana. "The kids have done an incredible job. It is an incredible example for other kids."

Other club members include

Sarah Heber and Jenna Moore.

"It is about awareness," said Philip DeRea, the executive director of the camp. "It is great to see young people take action."

DeRea pointed out Yourman is the only student in the high school with diabetes.

"That is not uncommon," he said, noting the camp lets them see they are not alone. "It helps them accept the disease."

Camp Neveda in Stillwater is located on 72 acres with a seven-acre lake. Facilities available for campers include cabins, a swimming pool, a health center, dining hall, a recreation area, an arts and crafts building and diet diabetic teaching rooms.

"There are many children who need to come to camp," Simms said. "It becomes a very special

SEE CLUB, PAGE 42

CLUB

FROM PAGE 39

place. They come back year after year."

She said it gives them a chance to meet other children like themselves while having fun doing normal camp activities. Camp is held during four sessions with family camps and 10 nurses available.

"It is an important resource for kids and their families," Simms said.

The camp's objective is to provide an active and safe camping experience for children with diabetes, while giving them a chance to establish ties with other children who have diabetes. With fund-raiser like those by the JDAC, the Camp Neveda Foundation aims to bring children to camp regardless of their ability to pay.

"It is the goal of the JDAC to send as many diabetic children to camp and spread the word about JDAC to other high schools in NeDeRea said the money raised by the club will go into the camp's scholarship fund. Simms added the camper who otherwise might not have been able to attend writes a letter to the person or group who sponsored them.

"We are very grateful for what they have done for us," Simms said.

Now that Yourman is too old to attend Camp Neveda as a camper, she plans to return as a counselor this summer.

Those wishing to make a donation to the club's fund-raiser can forward it to JDAC, c/o Fair Lawn High School, 14-00 Berdan Ave., Fair Lawn, NJ 07410.