

# THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

## Surfing brings solace

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LAGUNA BEACH – When Sage Ordonez found out at age 11 that she had Type 1 diabetes, she didn't break down, didn't cry, because she didn't know how much her life was going to change.

The falling apart, the despising her condition, that happened later.

"It didn't exactly hit me it would be with me the rest of my life ... I had this wall in front of me and kept all my emotions inside," Sage, now 15, recalled. "It wasn't until a few days after I got home from the hospital that it hit and I broke down. I hated it."

Saturday, the Costa Mesa girl joined about 100 other teens with Type 1 diabetes in a surf lesson at Three Arch Bay hosted by the Pediatric-Adolescent Diabetes Research and Education foundation (PADRE), which has guided her in managing her diabetes.

A PADRE worker was by Sage's side from the very first day she learned her diagnosis. Diabetes was manageable, Sage learned. Sure, she'd have to monitor her blood sugar and prick herself with needles to test her levels. Sure, if her blood sugar was low, she'd have to drink a juice or eat a snack and wait a few minutes before physical activity. Sure, she'd have to inject herself with insulin if her blood sugar was too high and she felt like molasses.

Sage's mom, Tisha Jenkins, wasn't as calm as Sage the day of the diagnosis. Even looking back on it, she starts to cry.

"It was like a life shock. It will never be the same. And as a parent, you wish you could make it better, but as a parent, you can't," Tisha said through tears. "I remember her being really strong but I wasn't. Sage was always pretty strong."

But PADRE helped Sage and her family adjust. Sage met other kids who had to do the same thing, other kids who had to self-administer shots in public. Tisha met other parents who, like her, sometimes had to stay up at night watching their child eat a bowl of cereal to get her blood sugar back to normal.

Through it all, diabetes became less burdensome and embarrassing. Now Sage doesn't care who's looking when she pulls out the needle or the insulin testing kit.

"I was a little skeptical at first because I didn't want to come out and say, 'I have Type 1 diabetes,' and share it with everyone," Sage said. "Right away (PADRE) made me more comfortable speaking to people and testing my blood in front of people."

Former professional surfer Scott Dunton, who also has Type 1 diabetes, taught Saturday's lesson for the 13- to 19-year-old teens.

"Any time I have a chance to help kids realize that living with diabetes isn't the end of the world, it's a good one," Dunton said in a statement.

Saturday was Sage's third time at the surf camp, though she only recently started to surf on her own. She

would always watch her dad surf, but never got in the water herself. PADRE's program and event director, Ryan Martz, pushed her into the water at her first Surfing with Diabetes event two years ago, and now she owns her own wetsuit and shares a surfboard with her dad.

"When I'm out there I kind of feel like it's just me. I've always loved being in the water," Sage said.

Sage also has celiac disease – which means her body does not digest gluten properly, and thus she can't eat wheat products – and harbors dreams of maybe becoming a pastry chef someday and baking gluten-free pastries.

Or, maybe Sage, who will be a high school sophomore this fall, will continue working with Martz and PADRE, helping teens like herself accept their diabetes.

"I just want to help out and stay connected," she said.

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