

REDLAND

## Son's diabetes diagnosis spurs fundraising

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John and Matthew Sanchez show off a catch at the Shell Key West Challenge, which benefited the Diabetes Research Institute in honor of Matthew, who has type 1 diabetes.

BY CASEY SHAW

For more than 30 years, the Diabetes Research Institute at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine has pioneered efforts toward finding a cure for diabetes.

A Redland family found out about the institute's work when 8-year-old Matthew Sanchez was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes in 2005.

Ever since then, Matthew's parents, John and Crystal Sanchez, and his grandfather, Hayden Blaylock, have become active supporters.

This year the family has raised more than \$110,000 and expects to reach a total of \$2 million next year, thanks largely to the Shell Key West Challenges, a fishing competition that raises funds for the institute.

Earlier this month, a family friend, James Accursio raised money for the institute at the 50th anniversary party of his family's Capri Restaurant in Florida City.

"I've known them my whole life," Accursio said. "It was an easy thing to jump on board."

"They are truly doing everything they can to help speed the DRI along its pathway to the cure," said foundation president and CEO Robert A. Pearlman.

The institute has made great strides in cell biology, immunology and cell transplant procedures. Much of its current research is aimed at increasing the supply of islet cells available for transplantation.

The need is crucial for Matthew.

"Most people think that diabetes is an adult disease," said Crystal Sanchez. "They are shocked when I tell them that my son's diabetes is a forever disease."

Her father is CEO and co-founder with his wife of the Blaylock Oil Co., that distributes Shell, Texaco and Pure gasoline and diesel products including lubricants, greases and antifreeze coolants.

Last month, Blaylock helped coordinate a weekend of fishing for the diabetes institute.

Almost 150 Shell associates of all walks of life came together for a weekend of sport fishing competition to raise money for the institute to continue its research on diabetes.

Every morning, volunteers provided breakfast and boxed lunches for the 33 teams that set out from Key West.

Matthew even caught fish during the tournament.

The weekend ended with a banquet, which not only gave fishing awards, but unexpectedly concluded with a \$25,000 check presented to the Blaylock family and the DRI from Shell Oil Products U.S.

The DRI will continue to work for the cure for diabetes with the support of the family and the rest of the community.

"We will cure diabetes. This is not a prediction, it is a promise," the DRI's Scientific Director Dr. Camillo Ricordi, declared on their website.

Blaylock Sanchez hopes that day comes sooner than later.

For now, she said Matthew is doing well managing the disease, but he still has to check his blood sugar, count his carbohydrates and give himself insulin numerous times during the day.