
Diabetech Founder Justin Eastzer partners with Medtronic to produce the documentary, “A Community United: Type 1 Support Amid the Los Angeles Fires” – February 21, 2025

Film highlights powerful T1D community support and crowdsourcing of diabetes supplies in the wake of the Los Angeles wildfires in January

During the devastating Los Angeles wildfires in January, Mr. Justin Eastzer, founder of the digital diabetes education platform [Diabetech](#), saw urgent calls on social media for diabetes supplies. Ms. Laura Pavlakovich, founder of [You’re Just My Type](#) — a nonprofit dedicated to supporting the mental health of people living with T1D — had spearheaded a grassroots movement to organize and distribute diabetes supplies to those without access during the disaster. Inspired by this extraordinary community response, Mr. Eastzer partnered with Medtronic to produce [A Community United](#), a fifteen-minute documentary short film capturing the resilience and support of the diabetes community in times of crisis.

With a background in Hollywood production, Mr. Eastzer recognized the importance of telling this story. “I know a story when I see one, and I didn’t want this one to fizzle away,” he said. “This isn’t going to be the last disaster.” In just six days, he conceptualized the film and began production. After very fast post-production work that was still in motion yesterday, the documentary was released this morning to much acclaim.



The film is a labor of love – neither Mr. Eastzer nor Director Mr. Dylan Leonard, both of whom have T1D themselves, accepted compensation for their work – all funding for the moving short documentary directly supported the film’s production.

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“A Community United” captures the moving response of the T1D community during the wildfires

The 15-minute documentary synthesizes interviews with people with diabetes, raw footage of the relief efforts, and striking images of the devastation, providing an intimate look at how the T1D community rallied together – beginning with a simple Instagram story shared by Ms. Pavlakovich. Initially seeking supplies for just one individual, her post quickly gained traction, leading to an outpouring of support from across the US and even internationally. The response was so significant that her organization established physical distribution centers to manage the donations.

In interviews, individuals with T1D — including Dr. Abbott Krieger and Ms. Tracy Mestres — shared harrowing experiences of losing their diabetes supplies in the wildfires. They recalled prioritizing their medical supply essentials over other valuables, even passports, yet still being unable to retrieve what they needed. Their struggles to access prescriptions, even after contacting doctors and insurance companies, underscored the systemic barriers in place with many pharmacies unable to override strict refill limitations despite the emergency.

Despite the challenges, every person involved expressed immense gratitude for the outpouring of support. They emphasized the importance of preparing for future emergencies and urged others with diabetes to store enough insulin and supplies with trusted individuals for at least one week. The documentary serves not just as a testament to resilience but as a call to action for preparedness and systemic change in prescription access during emergencies.

Mr. Eastzer shares his personal connection to the cause

Before the documentary’s release, we had the privilege of speaking with Mr. Eastzer, who led the documentary’s production. Mr. Eastzer said that he was diagnosed with T1D “from TikTok,” explaining that members of the online diabetes community recognized his symptoms and urged him to get screened. Since diagnosis, he said that the T1D community has been a driving force in his life, inspiring him to pay that support forward through Diabetech, his diabetes education podcast, and this impactful film.

Having lived in Los Angeles for eight years, Mr. Eastzer felt a deep connection to the city and was devastated by the wildfires. Witnessing the community’s response on social media, he was inspired to document this moment of solidarity. “So many people still don’t understand diabetes,” he said, noting that many people underestimate the daily maintenance required to survive. He hopes [A Community United](#) will raise awareness, encourage emergency preparedness, and inspire efforts to increase access to diabetes supplies.

Medtronic Diabetes provided critical support in sharing these stories

Medtronic Diabetes also recognized the urgent need for action during the wildfires, supporting both customers and employees affected by the crisis. Mr. Jeff Brown, Medtronic Diabetes’ Vice President of Customer & Strategic Channels Operations, was featured in the documentary. In a very moving conversation with him today, he spoke of the company’s commitment to community support, and beyond this, his own commitment to the field given his late mother had diabetes. “*This is my why.*”

“This was a disaster close to home,” Mr. Brown said, who earlier in his Medtronic career lived in Sherman Oaks for a dozen years. Many Medtronic employees are based in the company’s Northridge office. “This is a time to be brand-agnostic and work together upstream.” Movingly referencing “taking off company jerseys and working as one team to ensure people with diabetes can access the supplies they need,” Mr. Brown asked how the field could work with pharmacies and insurance companies to be more prepared in the future.

Beyond the immediate crisis response, Mr. Brown similarly emphasized the need for long-term planning and systemic improvements in disaster preparedness. “We all need to step up in times of crisis, take on responsibility, and find ways to provide greater access and help those who need it.”

During the wildfires, Medtronic used its Northridge facility as a distribution center, allowing customers to stop by and collect critical diabetes supplies. The company also collaborated with local field representatives to improve pharmacy access. Now San Antonio-based, Mr. Brown expressed enormous care for those affected by this crisis – his clear and open emotions regarding the city and what could be done collaboratively for those affected in the diabetes ecosystem spoke volumes.

The overwhelming support demonstrated throughout the wildfire crisis reaffirmed the power of the diabetes community. As Mr. Brown said, “That’s why many of us work at Medtronic Diabetes. It’s personal to us. Our customers needed us, so we needed to be there for them.”

--by Nour Khachemoune, Molly Grazioso, Andrew Goyette, and Kelly Close