

## MEDIA RELEASE

# Ensuring Northerners have Access to the Services they need to Manage their Diabetes

December 27, 2017 – Donald Bretzlaff is an older adult who’s been living with Type 2 Diabetes for nearly two decades. He lost his leg to the disease, and it left him blind in one eye. He has also developed nerve damage which causes him pain.

For the last four years, Mr. Bretzlaff has been attending Diabetes Care Service in Sudbury, a Health Sciences North program which offers services to people living with diabetes. He has access to a chiropodist, social worker, doctor, nurse, and dietitian.

“Diabetes affects many different organs and parts of the body,” said Mr. Bretzlaff. “That’s why it’s so important that all of the services I need are available to me in one place, and the care that I get is second to none.”

The North East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) continually works with its partners, like Health Sciences North, to ensure Donald and other Northerners with diabetes have access to the services they need to properly manage their diabetes and live healthy lives.

The North East LHIN supports more than two dozen diabetes education programs in hospitals, community health centres, and community agencies. The expertise of staff is also made available to people in surrounding areas – in person and through the Ontario Telemedicine Network – helping to ensure equitable access for residents of remote Northeastern Ontario communities.

As well, the North East LHIN supports a Chronic Disease Self-Management program, which teaches people with chronic health conditions the skills they need to better manage their symptoms. The North East LHIN also supports a Centre for Complex Diabetes Care, which provides patients with a single point of access to diabetes management and treatment support.

“Education is vital to the management of diabetes,” said Kate Fyfe, Interim CEO, North East LHIN. “We know that rates of diabetes in Northeastern Ontario are higher than the provincial



Donald Bretzlaff waits for a Sudbury Transit bus. He has vision loss due to diabetes and is no longer able to drive.

average for a number of chronic diseases, including diabetes. We are working to help Northerners take an active role managing their health, and having access to diabetes care.”

The Diabetes Education Centre of Parry Sound and Area Communities is another North East LHIN partner that supports people living with pre-diabetes, diabetes, and gestational diabetes – a temporary condition that occurs during pregnancy. The centre provides programs, education, and resources to help people monitor their blood sugar levels, medications, eating, and exercise. It also offers advanced nursing foot care.

“We aim to provide individualized care to promote self-management for our clients living with diabetes,” said Amanda Mathieu, Diabetes Program Coordinator and Heather Fisher, Dietitian, West Parry Sound Health Centre. “This empowers the client to feel confident and informed in managing their care.”



Staff and volunteers at West Parry Sound Health Centre form a blue circle, the universal symbol for diabetes, to commemorate World Diabetes Day.

**FACTS:**

- More than 1.6 million people in Ontario are living with diabetes. Another 2.3 million people have pre-diabetes.
- Every four hours, there is one amputation in Ontario as a result of a diabetic foot ulcer.
- In Northeastern Ontario, the rates of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, are higher than the average provincial rates.
- People with diabetes are encouraged to take an active role in the day-to-day management of their own health care and can access one of Ontario’s Diabetes Education Programs for assistance at [www.northeasthealthline.ca](http://www.northeasthealthline.ca)

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