

**Matthew "Matty" Zimmerman**

Iona Preparatory School

Ever since my diagnosis in 2013, I have been fighting for a cure to type 1 diabetes. Recently, I have taken on the role of Team Captain of the Type 1 Toughs. This is a team of supporters my family and I put together to raise money for Breakthrough T1D, a nonprofit that funds diabetes research. In an effort to expand the team throughout my school community, I organized several events over the past few years, including two weightlifting competitions, an assembly, and various t-shirt sales. My favorite of these events was a question and answer event with former Major League Baseball player Ron Darling. As a Mets fan, it was a dream come true to work alongside this Mets legend and discuss our shared experiences with type 1.

The impact of my advocacy extends beyond just my school community. Federal funding for the Special Diabetes Program, the largest diabetes research program in the country, was scheduled to expire at the end of January. To build support for continued funding, I set up a table during lunch, where I worked with staff and students to send over 100 letters to our congressmen. A few weeks ago, Congress increased funding by \$40 million and extended it through December 31, 2026.

I spent roughly 150 hours, planning, setting up, and executing these events which, in turn, raised over \$20,000 for Breakthrough T1D. I believe that the value of these events extends far beyond the money we raised, though. Type 1 diabetes is very uncommon and rarely gets the recognition it deserves, something that I have experienced firsthand from growing up with it. These events provided me the opportunity to educate hundreds about this disease and break stigmas surrounding it, positively impacting the lives of other children battling this disease.



^^Pictures taken at the school assembly I held at the Iona Prep Lower School March 2025



^^Pictures taken at the first and second annual Type 1 Tough Weightlifting Competitions I organized May 2025



^^Pictures taken at the Breakthrough T1D charity walk I brought the Type 1 Toughs to Oct 2025



^^Pictures taken at the Q&A event featuring Ron Darling I organized Nov 2025