

Camp EDI History

The Ed and Gloria Hirsch Camp for Children with Diabetes honors and celebrates a family that has been dedicated to improving the lives of children living with diabetes for decades. When Ed and Gloria's eldest son, Irl, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in the 1960s, Gloria took her fear and worry and became her son's advocate and champion. With information and support from the American Diabetes Association (ADA), Gloria educated herself and her family on the disease. Learning about Camp EDI (Exercise, Diet, and Insulin) through the ADA, Gloria and Ed enrolled Irl in the camp when he was in first grade. This allowed a very young child to learn about his disease, become empowered to manage it, and perhaps most importantly, have the chance to be around other kids who were just like him.

That first year at camp led Gloria to a 40-year campaign of volunteerism and advocacy for the ADA. She and Ed started the yearly "bike-a-thon," now known as the Tour de Cure® in St. Louis. Over many years, they raised over two million dollars for ADA programs, including Camp EDI.

Camp EDI had a big impact, not only on Irl, but his younger brother, James (whose family calls him Jimmy), diagnosed with type 1 diabetes as a teenager in 1977. While Irl experienced camp first as a camper and then as a counselor, Jimmy came to camp as a newly diagnosed counselor. Camp EDI helped him adjust to his new reality while giving him the opportunity to counsel children on how they too can manage their lives and pursue their dreams.



Ed and Gloria's third child, Lynn (now Lynn Hirsch Friedman), does not have diabetes, but she also played a significant role at Camp EDI. She was a counselor for many years and, drawing on her experience as a sister with two type 1 brothers, she provided her campers with education, encouragement, and love so they could live full lives.

The impact of Camp EDI on Irl had even deeper outcomes. Declaring after his first camp session that he wanted to become a doctor, Irl achieved that goal, and has become one of the most highly regarded endocrinologists in the world. He has dedicated his career to patient care, clinical research, and teaching—focusing on treating and managing diabetes. The ADA, which helped his mother find resources for young Irl, honored Dr. Hirsch as the 2004 recipient of the Outstanding Physician-Clinician Award.

Jimmy became a journalist and best-selling author whose experiences with diabetes became part of his work. He wrote *Cheating Destiny: Living with Diabetes, America's Biggest Epidemic*, which not only shares his personal journey with diabetes, but that of his son, Garrett. Garrett was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at age three. Lynn, meanwhile, continued to be a passionate advocate for Camp EDI, always supporting her brothers and the cause.

Before Gloria Hirsch passed away from cancer in 2002, the ADA, the team at Camp EDI, and her husband and children honored her at a special dinner in 2001 and shared the news that the camp to which she had given so much of her life would forever be called the Gloria Hirsch Camp for Children with Diabetes. When Ed passed in 2013, his support was honored by adding his name to the camp.

The ADA continues to be humbled by the dedication of the Hirsch family in so many ways, and we thank them for creating a legacy that enriches so many to this day.