The Power of Prevention: No More Diabetes
By Debra Jim
Member of the *Small Steps. Big Rewards.* Team to Prevent type 2 Diabetes

We have a lot of routines and habits. Some good, some bad. And we all have a few we need to change. But how often do any of us really embrace a change in routine or a change in habit that also empowers our community? Adopting a routine of healthy eating and physical activity to prevent type 2 diabetes is that sort of change, and it offers powerful rewards.

As an American Indian, I knew I was at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. My mother had it, her mother had it, and many of my aunts and uncles had it. I knew that I couldn't just sit around waiting for it to happen to me.

My job makes it hard to come up with excuses not to be active -- I work at the Chickasaw Nation's Carl Albert Indian Health Facility, where American Indians receive medical treatment for illnesses arising largely from unhealthy eating and not enough physical activity. I knew I had to change my eating habits and get moving. But would it do any good? The answer is yes. The good news is that we have the power to improve our health and change our destiny. But it means we have to stick to a new routine -- a routine of making healthy living a priority.

Two years ago, I started working out, and in the last six months I have even added weight training to my routine. I work out at home with my husband and as a family we encourage each other to do some form of physical activity each day so we can live healthier lives.

I'll admit establishing my routine took time. But I found that as I became more committed to myself and physical activity, I became more committed to other routines in my life and accepted them more willingly. It's true what they say about physical activity changing your outlook on life, but what's even more exciting is that routine physical activity can actually change the outcome of our lives by preventing or delaying type 2 diabetes.

Recently, I joined the National Diabetes Education Program's *Small Steps. Big Rewards.* Team to help empower my community to take small steps toward a healthier future. We know that diabetes severely threatens the well-being of the American Indian community. But the good news is that we can educate our loved ones that "We Have the Power to Prevent Diabetes," and we will be taking steps to fight back against this health threat endangering our community.

The power is within us to reverse the high incidence of type 2 diabetes in our community. But we must listen to those who have already taken the right path and learn by their example. Then our individual routines can produce a collective good -- a healthy and vibrant American Indian and Alaska Native community.

For more tips on how you can prevent type 2 diabetes, visit www.ndep.nih.gov or call 1-800-438-5383 and ask for the "We Have the Power to Prevent Diabetes" tip sheet.

Debra Jim lives in Ada, OK with her husband and two children. She is an administrative assistant for the Carl Albert Indian Health Facility. As a member of the National Diabetes Education Program's Small Steps. Big Rewards. *Team, Mrs. Jim is leading by example to show that type 2 diabetes can be prevented in the American Indian and Alaska Native communities.*