

MIXING

MAGIC Medicine

ALUMNUS' VOLUNTEERISM TRANSFORMS
THE LIVES OF DIABETIC YOUNGSTERS

By Helen Kaiser



Michael S. Anger, MD, FASN, FACP, Denver, Colo.
B.S., Biology, Wilkes 1977

M.D., Hahnemann Medical College, Philadelphia 1981

Career: President of Western Nephrology Group, a medical practice with 12 physicians, 70 employees and a partnership with five dialysis clinics throughout Denver.

Notable: Has combined diverse interests such as his medical practice, magic, biking, ice hockey and skiing, blending fundraising with fun-raising to give back to his family and community.

Favorite Wilkes Memory: Skiing with the Polar Bear Club and working as a disk jockey for the school radio station, WCLH-FM.

AS A 12-YEAR-OLD WITH earnings from his Brooklyn, N.Y., paper route, Dr. Michael Anger '77 was able to fund his fascinating hobby: magic tricks. On visits to the renowned Tannen's Magic Store in Manhattan, he was captivated by the store clerks' sleight of hand—card tricks, coin effects, disappearing silks and the like.

"Soon I was making my own tricks and performing them at birthday parties," Anger recalls.

Who could predict that, as a grown-up physician in Denver, Colo., he would resurrect his box of tricks to bring magic to the lives of children with diabetes?

Making insulin syringes appear to float in the air—"just stuff to make kids smile"—is one of the talents Anger uses annually as a volunteer at the week long Camp Colorado, sponsored by the American Diabetes Association. Anger has been involved with the camp for the past eight years, pulling nearly round-the-clock duty over six days as senior physician to ensure the 260 participants, ages 8 to 17, are having a healthy good time.

This means supervising the infirmary, dosing insulin at the dining hall and making 2:30 a.m. and 5:30 a.m. bed checks to ensure campers' blood sugar levels haven't spiked or dropped dangerously because of their physically active days and new meal regimens at the pristine Colorado mountain lake retreat.

The camp, with about 75 medical and ADA-trained volunteers, blends the fun of regular summer camp with education about diabetes management tailored to each camper's stage of development.

"It's exhausting, but it's special," says Anger, who was named 2009 Father of the Year by the Denver office of the ADA.

He and Rachel, his wife of 26 years, have four children: Matthew, 23, a student at the University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine; Eric, 21, at Northwestern University; Emily, 19, at the University of Oregon, and Max, 17, a high school senior.

Max was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at the age of four.

"Naturally, this impacted the whole family," Anger says. "Emotionally it's very stressful, but we were lucky to be close and work through it. There's a lot to learn about diet changes and medication, but the philosophy we used to raise our son was: 'Don't let diabetes control you; you control the diabetes.'"

Max's disease sparked his dad's involvement with the ADA, which reaches out to 23.6 million Americans with diabetes.



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Suehila Glass, executive director of ADA's Denver office, said Anger was a natural choice for Father of the Year because of his personal and professional connections with diabetes, his belief in the ADA's mission and his passionate interest in helping patients.

"We were honored to recognize someone who is a leader in his own profession and who truly embraces family values. Because he has given of his personal time, finances and expertise, we have been able to fund research and continue programs for persons with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes," Glass says.

Board certified in nephrology—a specialty related to kidney function and diseases—Anger has also served as president of the National Kidney Foundation of Colorado and president of the Colorado Society of Nephrology. He serves on the clinical faculty advisory board for the University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine and has been teaching and volunteering as an attending physician at Denver Health Hospital for the past 22 years. Anger recently was honored with the university's community service award.

In the community, Anger has been president and board member of his homeowners association and president of the municipal water board. He enjoys roundtable discussions with the Mile High Magicians group to share techniques in the magic world. He would not, however, reveal how he can levitate a syringe. "It's magic," he says.

Family time includes biking with his wife on the 100-kilometer division of Tour de Cure to raise money for the ADA, playing ice hockey with his eldest son on "The Fighting Kidneys" team, and skiing.

Anger fondly recalls his biology coursework at Wilkes and wonderful experiences with Professor Charles Reif and Les Turoczi: "They were both favorite professors of mine, and ones I will never forget."

Opposite page: Dr. Michael Anger '77 teaches diabetes management strategies against the backdrop of Camp Colorado.

Above: Dr. Michael Anger '77, center, works his medical magic to bring smiles to the faces of children at an American Diabetes Association camp.

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