



# **Brainerd inspires others with diabetes as captain of Team Red**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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The Metro East Step Out: Walk to Stop Diabetes Red Strider Ambassador selection for 2015 is an appropriate inspirational man – James Brainerd – who was diagnosed as a diabetic in March 2013.

Brainerd has Type II diabetes. People with Type I diabetes take insulin; those with Type II control it with diet, exercise and either oral medication or insulin, sometimes both.

Red Striders include people with diabetes. Team Red, which Brainerd will lead in the Step Out: Walk on Sept. 19 at SIUE is made up of people with diabetes or someone with a family member with or has had the illness. Brainerd was 72 when he developed diabetes and at the time his hemoglobin A1c was 9.4. Today his A1c, a measure of blood sugars over a three-month period, is 5.9, he is so well-controlled.

Rawnie Berry, who coordinates the Metro East Step Out: Walk to Stop Diabetes, said Brainerd is the “poster child,” for what someone who develops diabetes should do to manage the disease.

“I am so humbled to be asked to serve as the Red Strider Ambassador and captain of Team Red,” Brainerd said. “I am anxious to get this program started and try to help people who are dealing with Type II or Type I diabetes. I just hope the message I share will change people’s attitude and get them on the right track. They can do a lot to control this disease.”

Brainerd was suggested for the role by Lisa James, a certified diabetes educator at Alton Memorial. Berry said he is described as someone who has taken charge of his circumstances with the illness and is doing the things needed to live a healthy life.

“He is an example of someone who changed the way they eat and added exercise to their life and are much healthier for it,” Berry said. “Through the help of his doctor and the diet and exercise, he has been able to get off insulin. It is important people realize these things are possible, they just have to be determined to live healthier now so that they can avoid horrible consequences that come late if they don't.”

When Brainerd saw his A1c was 9.4, he knew he had to make changes in his lifestyle. After eight months of exercising and watching his diet, he no longer had to take insulin.

“I weighed 248 when I started and Lisa at Alton Memorial set me straight,” he said. “She came up with a strongly recommended eating plan. Losing the weight and working out at Senior Services Plus worked for me. With the two combined, my weight really started to come off.”

Dr. James Riche is his physician and he has also been a guiding force with his illness. Dr. Riche also recommended that Brainerd have a colonoscopy in 2002 and they discovered he had colon cancer with a colonoscopy. He had 24 chemo treatments and 12 years later he is clean.

Brainerd takes an oral medication – Metformin – every day. He said he is proof people can live and prosper with the illness. "You just have to get your head right to do it." Brainerd said.