

GET BACK UP & KEEP

By focusing on serving others, this young woman doesn't let obstacles like diabetes get her down.

By Carlisa Cramer

For an entire week, Sydney G., 14, from Utah, USA, visibly carried a copy of the Book of Mormon everywhere she went—to school, to her extracurricular activities, and to church. She was prayerfully trying to find someone to share the gospel with, and keeping the Book of Mormon out with her was a constant reminder of that goal.

One day, she went to the office at school and accidentally left the book there. Without even opening the cover, the office secretary knew immediately whose it was. That week, Sydney had become known at her school for carrying that Book of Mormon with her. And

throughout her life, she's become known for many other things as well.

For instance, she participates in student council. She dances for her school's dance company. She was the lead in an *Alice in Wonderland* musical. She volunteers for a service group. She cheers. She crafts.

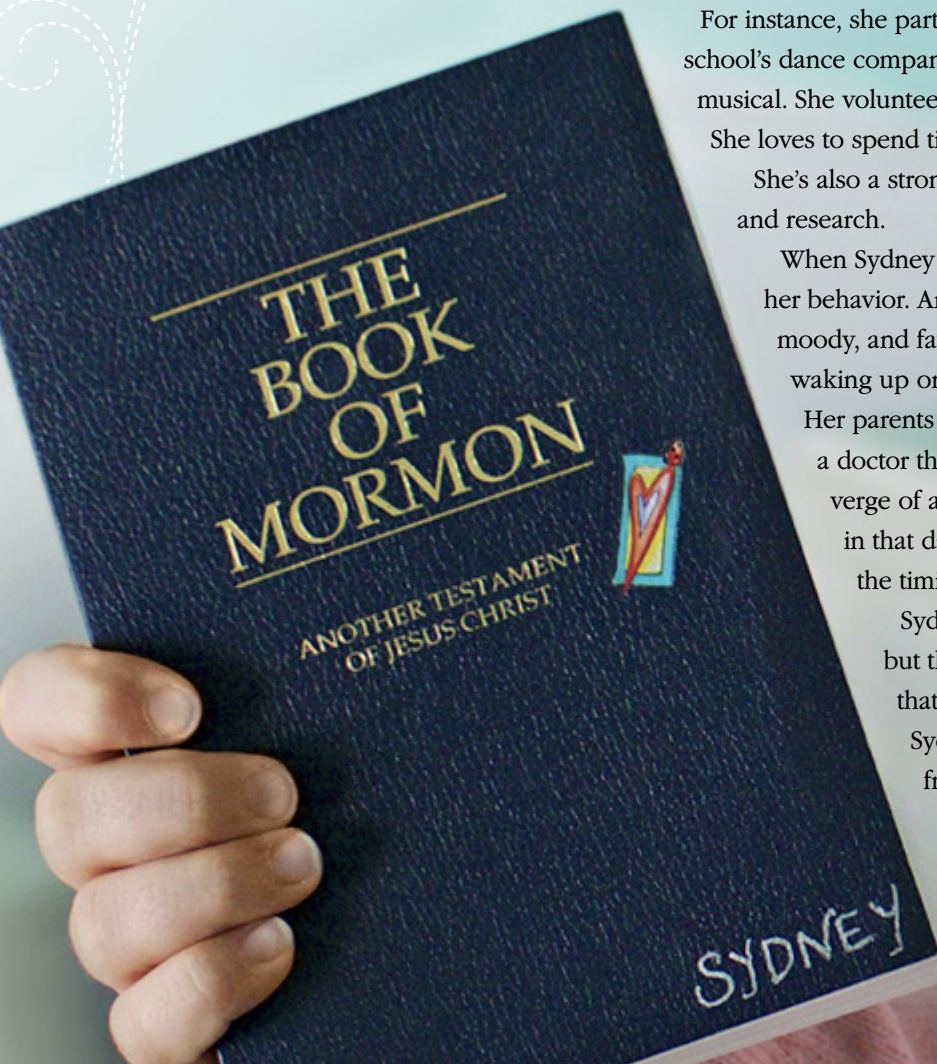
She loves to spend time with her friends and family.

She's also a strong advocate of type 1 diabetes awareness and research.

When Sydney was three, her parents noticed changes in her behavior. Among other things, she was extremely thirsty, moody, and fatigued. One day she slept for 22 hours, waking up only for moments before falling back asleep.

Her parents knew something was wrong and took her to a doctor the next morning. The doctor said she was on the verge of a diabetic coma and was lucky she came in that day. Sydney and her parents now recognize that the timing was more than luck; it was a blessing.

Sydney's diagnosis flipped her life upside down, but that hasn't stopped her from living a life that gives back to others. Despite her age, Sydney is a leader, role model, and friend as she works to help promote diabetes awareness.



GOING





(Above, top left) Sydney, when she was diagnosed. (Above, bottom left) Sydney (first row, far right) is a youth ambassador for the JDRF. (Above, right) Sydney loves participating in theater. (Below) For her twelfth birthday, Sydney invited her friends to do baptisms for the dead!



WHAT IS TYPE 1 DIABETES?

Type 1 diabetes is a disease in which the pancreas produces little or no insulin, the hormone that converts glucose into energy. To treat this, people with type 1 diabetes take insulin every time they eat to help their bodies get the energy they need.

If left untreated, diabetes can have serious complications. It's important to recognize the symptoms and be treated as early as possible. Type 1 diabetes requires constant care and vigilance throughout a person's entire life.



How She Got Started

In 2015, Sydney and her family participated in a fundraising walk managed by JDRF, an organization that helps fund research of type 1 diabetes. After the walk, Sydney wanted to keep helping. She says, "I was super excited to get out and do stuff, and I wanted to inform people of the symptoms of type 1 diabetes so they would know to get tested." To do this, she and her mom created a social media page to promote awareness.

Their first post included pictures of the walk, and they've continued with regular posts debunking myths about diabetes, promoting fundraisers, and showcasing diabetes-related events and activities Sydney participates in.

Sydney knows the impact youth can have in their communities, and she hopes to keep helping those around her. "Young people can make a huge difference," she says, "and it's good for them! They get to get out and help the community. It's just good for the soul."

Making a Difference

She's already seen some positive results from her efforts. One day, soon after they started the page, Sydney's mom felt prompted to post Sydney's diagnosis story. A woman in their neighborhood read the post and then, two days later, recognized the symptoms in her own daughter. As a result of a prompting, this five-year-old girl was able to receive an early diagnosis and get the medical attention she needed.

The Impact of Friendship

Sydney knows it's important to have friends during times of trial, and she always strives to be that friend for people in times of need. When she heard of another young girl in the community who was just diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, Sydney immediately reached out and met with her. The girl's mother later

told Sydney about the great influence she had on her daughter. The daughter had felt alone in her trial because no one else she knew had diabetes. But immediately after Sydney's visit, she had a friend, and that made all the difference.

Sydney also recognizes the importance of friendship in her own life and strives to include and love others. When she was about to turn 12, she was "probably more excited than anyone to go to the temple for the first time." So for her birthday party, she invited some friends over to eat a formal dinner and then go to the temple to do baptisms and confirmations on behalf of those who have died. One of her close friends, Lindsay,* wasn't a member of the Church, but Sydney still wanted to include her. So Sydney invited Lindsay to the birthday dinner with them and explained why the temple was so important to her.

Remember that Book of Mormon that Sydney carried around with her? She felt prompted to give it to Lindsay with her testimony. Though Lindsay respectfully said she didn't believe in the book, Sydney didn't focus on the rejection. Instead, Sydney just appreciated the opportunity she had to share her testimony with someone she cares about.

Staying Positive

Though she sometimes feels discouraged, Sydney tries to stay positive and move forward in her goal to help others. She says, "I think it's important to just keep going if you're having a trial. It helps to focus on something positive. Like, if you fall off your bike, you just get back up and keep going, and soon you'll forget you even fell off in the first place."

Every day, Sydney chooses to focus on the positive of her situation by striving to be a leader in her community and a friend to those who need one. She's learned that the smallest decisions—like deciding one day to go to a fundraiser walk with her family—can make a big difference. **NE**

The author lives in Utah, USA.

* Name has been changed.



(Above) Last year Sydney's JDRF team raised over \$5,000. (Below, top left) She has participated in her school's dance company. (Below, top right) At last year's walk, Sydney cut the starting ribbon! (Below, bottom) Because of Sydney's social media page, Gracie (left) was able to be diagnosed early.

