

Diabetes month kicks off in state

by Amanda Villa

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The Wisconsin Senate formally recognized November as Diabetes Awareness Month last Tuesday.

The recognition, authored by Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, marks the first year the Senate acknowledged November as Diabetes Awareness Month.

Diabetes affects over 20 million adults and children in the United States and is the sixth leading cause of death in the country, Risser said.

“The joint resolution that we’re passing highlights the diabetes epidemic and encourages continued support for diabetes research,” Risser said. “What we’re trying to do is bring about greater awareness of diabetes.”

Risser said the joint resolution is supported by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, the American Diabetes Association and the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians.

The goal of Diabetes Awareness Month, Risser said, is to promote awareness about the severity of the disease and encourage people to be tested.

“Individuals can be active in helping to fight this disease,” Risser said. “This resolution is to develop awareness.”

Legislators do not have any specific programs set up for the month, but are trying to raise awareness to the disease and its seriousness.

John Clement, Wisconsin’s American Diabetes Association executive director, said the association has been working with media to have press releases go out later in November to inform people what this month entails, as well as inform them about getting tested.

“In Wisconsin, there are 330,000 people that have diabetes,” Clement said. “But so many people see that they have signs or test high [sugar levels], but don’t go to the doctor, and they go undiagnosed.”

The American Diabetes Association will be hosting activities throughout the state, including booths set up at health fairs and learning opportunities in businesses around Wisconsin.

“We will do a ‘lunch and learn’ at a local business — it’s where we’ll go in and basically talk about the topics of diabetes and what to look out for, such as diagnoses and what signs to look out for,” Clement said.

Online and at appearances, the American Diabetes Association offers a Diabetes Risk Test. The test uses a series of questions to determine the probability of being diagnosed with diabetes.

If the test results reveal a high chance of having diabetes, the test offers different ways to prevent diabetes and precautionary measures. This test is more of a guideline because only a doctor can diagnose diabetes.

Besides going to the doctor and having blood sugar tested, Clement said it is important for people to live a healthy lifestyle by eating right and exercising, adding that awareness and education are key elements to fighting diabetes.