



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MATAWA HEALTH CO-OPERATIVE AND ST. JOSEPH'S FOUNDATION OF THUNDER BAY
MARK NATIONAL DIABETES MONTH BY RAISING FUNDS FOR FOOTWEAR**

THUNDER BAY, ON – November is National Diabetes Month, and to mark the occasion the Matawa Health Co-operative has partnered with St. Joseph's Foundation of Thunder Bay for Stepping out for Foot Health – a fun walk taking place Sunday, November 3, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. at the Intercity Shopping Centre – to raise awareness and funds for footwear to help reduce the number of amputations among people living with diabetes.

"Indigenous people face an amputation rate seven times higher than the provincial average, while the amputation rate in northern Ontario is twice the provincial average," says Nick Kwiatkowski, a Diabetes Educator and Wound Care Specialist at the Matawa Health Co-operative. "But research suggests that 85 per cent of amputations are preventable, which is why we're trying to bring awareness to this serious but preventable issue."

Diabetes can lead to poor circulation and nerve damage that reduces sensation in feet, leading to injuries, diabetic ulcers, infection, and potentially amputation. But access to health care, including foot care and wound care, and proper fitting footwear can help prevent injuries that lead to complications such as amputations.

Last year, St. Joseph's Foundation of Thunder Bay and the Matawa Health Co-operative distributed over 680 pairs of shoes to people who lacked access to, or couldn't afford the footwear they needed, to help prevent complications from diabetes.

"At St. Joseph's Foundation, we are deeply committed to strengthening health and wellness in our community. Every initiative we undertake is a step toward ensuring the people of Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario have access to the quality care they need. We are grateful for the unwavering support of our community, whose generosity and compassion make it possible for us to continue transforming lives," says Frank Zanatta, Chair of St. Joseph's Foundation of Thunder Bay.

Individuals and groups are encouraged to join the movement by registering or donating to Stepping out for Foot Health – presented by BioPed and supported by Knights of Columbus Thunder Bay – online at <https://www.siftb.net/walk>. Sponsorship packages are also available through St. Joseph's Foundation of Thunder Bay.

Those who cannot attend Stepping out for Foot Health are encouraged to track their steps using the [Strava app](#) to raise funds and awareness about diabetic foot complications and the need for proper footwear.

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