

# AADE17: Driving Change and Innovation

**"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."**

—Charles Darwin



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It is from this quote that I write my second letter to you. Nothing is more certain than change; it is an ongoing, continual process, and we can choose to be either active or passive participants. The ability to manage that change effectively is a critical component of success, and this is where innovation comes to play. While innovation is usually analogous to change, it is often viewed as the application of better solutions that meet new requirements, unarticulated needs, or a changing market. For many of us, change is reactionary, but the preferred approach is to be proactive whereby we identify the opportunity for change, seize it, plan for it, and implement that plan successfully. This is innovation!

From these concepts came the theme for the 2017 AADE Annual Conference: *Driving Change and Innovation*. This yearly meeting has always served as an excellent forum for members to learn, exchange ideas, identify challenges, and share innovative ways to drive change. The 2017 conference will continue to explore the boundaries of education, engagement, and the spheres of influence within the broader diabetes community. Four days filled with opportunities to expand your knowledge, mine the power of technology, discover new products and services, network with peers, recharge, and HAVE SOME FUN!

This year's annual conference will be held from Friday, August 4, to Monday, August 7, in Indianapolis, Indiana, and I could not be more excited as Indianapolis is the city where my career as a volunteer with AADE started! It's a great city with a lot to offer, and the location is perfect for travel from any area of the country.

The AADE17 Annual Conference Planning Committee is dedicated to identifying the topics and speakers that will deliver high-level quality programming and help you navigate through the maze of new and novel innovations in diabetes care. Our hope is to enhance your knowledge and skills in leveraging these emerging options and develop strategies that improve coordination of care, optimize patient outcomes, and drive change within your practices at home. Programming will again

cover 6 key areas to help you advance your skills and expertise, and we will continue to dedicate 2 specialty days focused on the areas of prevention and technology. Start watching for additional conference information in your AADE communications and on social media.

Speaking of social media . . . have you checked out the "Why I attend AADE17" commercial contest on the AADE website? Visit [diabeteseducator.org/creative](http://diabeteseducator.org/creative) for the contest rules, then get your cameras rolling for a chance to win some great prizes! This contest will certainly get your engines started, tap into your creative genius, and test your technical skills.

This brings me to my final focus today: technology. Technology plays an important role in every industry as well as in our personal lives, but of all the industries where technology plays a crucial role, health care is definitely one of the most important. It is changing the way we practice as well as when, where, and how we reach the communities we serve. Improving quality of life is one of the main benefits of integrating new innovations into medicine, and the AADE strategic plan supports this focus by placing the person living with diabetes at the center of all we do. Virtual technologies enhance our reach within the diabetes prevention space as well as within the domain of diabetes self-management education and support. AADE is committed to exploring how these emerging technologies will advance practice, improve health, and empower persons with diabetes to be active participants in their own care.

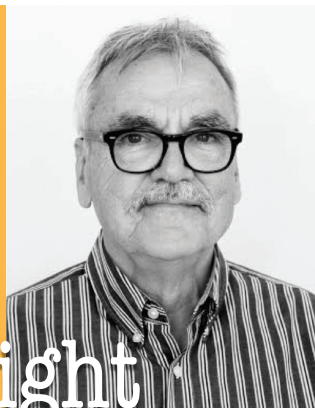
At AADE, we realize the importance of patient engagement in the process of good health care and have included the voice of the person living with diabetes in developing many of our key initiatives. Our partnerships with many in the diabetes online community (DOC) and patient facing organizations (PFO) have helped us in this realm. The DOCs and PFOs provide opportunities to strengthen communication and support among individuals with diabetes, their families, health care providers, the health care industry, policy makers, and the general public, and they can be a powerful forum for you, the educator!

In each publication of *AADE in Practice*, I feature one of the key influencers in this space. This issue spotlights the work of the Diabetes Hands Foundation and CEO Gene Kunde. This organization has been a pioneer in the DOC and continues to be one of the best and most comprehensive resources and connecting points for people with diabetes. Please enjoy Gene's letter to you, and I hope you will take him up on his invitation to engage with this valuable community.

In closing, I encourage you to attend AADE17 as an investment in your future. Sign up today at [aae17.org](http://aae17.org). I hope to see you there! ■

AADE

# DOC Spotlight



**Gene Kunde**

CEO, Diabetes Hands Foundation

[diabeteshf.org](http://diabeteshf.org), [tudiabetes.org](http://tudiabetes.org) (English), [estudiabetes.org](http://estudiabetes.org) (Spanish)

Diabetes Hands Foundation (DHF) is a support organization that exists to help ensure that nobody living with diabetes ever feels alone. We work to fulfill that goal by providing education, information, and support for anybody and everybody regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, social-economic status, or type of diabetes. Most of that is accomplished online through our 2 platforms: [Tudiabetes.org](http://Tudiabetes.org) (English) and [Estudiabetes.org](http://Estudiabetes.org) (Spanish). We currently have more than 140 000 registered members in our communities, and there are no dues, fees, or costs for any of our services.

The DHF was founded in 2008 to make it easier for people to access diabetes-related information and make better decisions relative to their diabetes management. As a result, we are one of the pioneers in the DOC and have accumulated an extensive collection of resources that are easily accessed by those seeking information or answers to their diabetes-related issues. That includes technical and clinical data, podcast interviews with people who have diabetes, health care providers, industry representatives, and many more. We have become a useful guide and resource relative to type 2 diabetes prevention, nutrition, management, and other related issues.

Many visitors consider our online forums to be the most useful support mechanism they have at their disposal for personal management of their diabetes. There they find people just like them who have or are facing the same issues, and they are able to learn from those experiences and recognize that they are not alone in their struggle.

We have long recognized the need to help elevate the voice for people with diabetes, and that is why we are active in advocacy. To us, this means more than advocating for legislative change, an important activity that we leave to others who are better equipped and focused on that method to encourage positive change. Instead, we work with those who see a problem in the diabetes space and use their existing resources to help create a solution. They are passionate visionaries, disruptors,

and change-makers and come from all walks of life with varied backgrounds and experiences. We see our role as a facilitator to help provide them with direction and resources to make a positive difference.

We have spent the past year refining our listening skills in an effort to better understand the needs of the diabetes community. Our intent has been to deliver new added value for the community, and technology will continue to be at the center of that process.

At DHF, we gain daily inspiration from the members of our online community. They are the reason we exist, and serving them provides us with tremendous satisfaction. Keeping up with the many changes that are occurring in the diabetes sector is a challenge, but a good one. It gives us hope for a future without diabetes.

Data analysis is a key skill set for us. Because we have existed for almost 10 years and serve over 5 million visitors to our sites each year, we have a lot of data to help us in our decision making.

The sheer volume of visits we see shows us just how important social media and the many online connections provided by the DOC are in daily life. Diabetes is a 24/7 disease, and our websites are available anytime from anywhere with an Internet connection.

For diabetes educators, participating in this community is important in understanding the concerns, topics, and attitudes that are prevalent among people with diabetes and their caregivers at any given time. We welcome you to visit our sites and actively participate. DHF exists to serve all members of the diabetes community and would like to see more involvement with educators. We recognize and appreciate your unique importance in the health care system and want to serve and support you better. That happens when we all connect and learn.

You can find out more about the Diabetes Hands Foundation at [diabeteshf.org](http://diabeteshf.org), [tudiabetes.org](http://tudiabetes.org) (English) or [estudiabetes.org](http://estudiabetes.org) (Spanish). You can also connect with us on Facebook ([/diabetesHF](https://www.facebook.com/diabetesHF)) or Twitter ([@diabeteshf](https://twitter.com/diabeteshf)).