Diabetes Reversed

May 13, 2014 By Charles Mattocks

It's been a busy time for me, but recently I spoke with Sarah Centrella, a success coach for professional athletes, and the reality TV show Reversed. She is also a motivational speaker and the author of the blog Thoughts.Stories.Life. Here's the story she produced from the conversation I had with her.

Charles Mattocks is on a mission to change the way we think about diabetes. Known as the "The Poor Chef," Charles has been a champion of healthy eating for many years, and has been featured on many shows such as Dr. Oz, CNN, the Today Show and many others. Charles has taken his celebrity status and channeled it into a cause close to his heart, one he hopes will effect change on a global scale. He is the producer, creator and host of the new reality TV show Reversed. Charles is no stranger to show business, having spent most of his life as an actor, celebrity chef, and bestselling author.
Here, he tells us his story.

Sarah: How did you become so passionate about diabetes and when did you decide to champion the call for change?

Charles: Four years ago I was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. It was a fluke really, I'd been traveling and seemed to be using the restroom more than normal and thought I'd see the local doctor, maybe get some antibiotics. That's when he gave me the diagnosis, and immediately wanted to prescribe me medication.

This doctor had none of my medical history, and no knowledge of me or my background. He didn't know what kind of diet I ate, or if I lived an active lifestyle, nothing. He gave me no other option aside from medication; no information, no suggestions on diet or exercise, 'just here take these pills'. So that started me thinking, if he was doing this to me, then how many other people was he, doing this to? And how many other doctors behaved this same way? That lit a fire in me, I wanted to find a way to right the wrongs of those people, the ones who maybe didn't feel comfortable standing up for themselves, or didn't have the right information or access to help outside of medication. That's where my passion came from and out of that came this dream for the show and my documentary.

Sarah: Reversed is your new TV show. Where did the idea to create a reality show about diabetes come from?

Charles: I had been working in the field for about four years building a name, yet my reach was still very small. There are almost 400 million people living with diabetes around the world, so I knew there were millions of people with the disease that I was not reaching.

I had set out to affect change on a massive, global scale and this show has the potential and the power to do that. So it made sense to film the show and our first casting call in Jamaica. I have a special connection with Jamaica being the nephew of Bob Marley and having family and cousins still living there my name carries a bit of weight. Most critically, one out of every three Jamaicans have diabetes. It seemed like the perfect location to showcase what a global health crisis this is. Dr. Robin Smith said it best, when describing our show "It's about healing, not hazing." Seven people come from around the world, with both type1 and type 2 diabetes, stay for two weeks learning how to potentially reverse their disease. They learn to manage and control it in a holistic and healthy way. In addition, they get advice from top experts, and show the rest of the world how it can be done as well. This show can come into people's living room and educate them, motivate and inspire them to take control of the disease and live their best life.

Sarah: Tell me about the open auditions and casting you held in Jamaica last weekend. What was it like to see your vision come to life?

Charles: It was beyond words. Overwhelming to see the support from Jamaican's and the excitement they had; over 1,000 people showed up. We also turned it into a health fair to help educate people and give back to the people of Jamaica. We had doctors testing people and handing out information, answering questions. Medtronic flew in from Florida to support the event, as did many other sponsors. CVM TV, radio stations and The Gleaner Jamaica's main newspaper, all were there to support the event. The atmosphere was so high and positive; Alex Marley my cousin was there doing the music and uplifting people. It was amazing to me the lengths people went to, to attend showing up hours before the event and coming from four and five hours away, and these are sick people, ones who sacrificed to be there, that was incredibly moving. I think they really felt the connection, and felt we were there to help and understand their situation and struggle, they understood that we were on their side.

But this was not an easy task to produce. An event of this caliber would have easily cost a hundred thousand dollars to produce, but my team was able to do it on a very meager budget with help from our sponsors. I would love to hold another similar casting and health fair in maybe Barbados or Dominican Republic where so many people are affected with the disease, so I'm hoping that more of these big companies will want to support the event and help us start a global movement.

The thing I found most shocking was that roughly 70 percent of the people with diabetes who came to audition for the show really knew nothing about the disease. They didn't understand that nutrition and diet has such a huge impact on their wellbeing. The common answer is that they "eat what they can afford", and often that's some type of carbohydrate or fried food. So the education side is really lacking, and that's where filming Reversed and getting it on TVs across the globe can help people learn how to manage and control their diagnosis. It can be that tool, that education that's so desperately lacking.

Sarah: So what’s next? How can people be part of the show and join the movement?

Charles: People can check out our website for information on casting and filming, and where and when they will be able to watch the show. We begin filming the show this summer, and I will be looking for seven house guests/cast members to be on the show. We found some great candidates in Jamaica, but the show is definitely not fully cast so people should reach out if they are interested in being on the show.
And we’d love all the support we can get raising awareness and championing this cause. Sharing this message, taking the time to be educated if you have the disease, join the conversations on social media, and help us raise the bar for care and treatment of this deadly disease.

Don’t forget to visit my website. Just click here to go there!

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