

Brenda White, volunteer

I am Brenda Harris White, I am a 64 year old African American female, I am retired and loving it.

I got interested because there is diabetes in my family. My aunt had one leg amputated, and less than 3 weeks ago she was threatened to have the second leg amputated. But because of medical science, they only removed a toe.

The first research study that I was in was the African American health improvement project. Specifically targeting African Americans with Diabetes. To educate, to also do research, there was no medication involved, it was just research to gather data.

There were cooking classes, we may have a nutritionist there to talk about the effects of how you eat, a podiatrist, how to take care of your feet, the eye care in diabetes, so it was a full picture and people became sort of like a support group for each other. That's what they were called, support groups.

Each of the support groups could decide how they wanted to keep their people engaged. Like I said we had line dance. My particular group, we had a cheering squad.

Betty: "My name is Betty, and you can bet it, I check my feet cus I'm diabetic!"

"yaaaayy!!"

So we made up cheers about diabetes. So every week we'd have a different cheerleader with the pompoms. We wanted to make it fun.

"yaaaayy!!"

It was an easy program to follow, it was easy to have someone to contact, I never felt alone, or never felt disjointed and not knowing where to go for information. Anything they did as far as lab work, we always got a report, we had any questions about it, they explained, it.

It's not hard to do. There's not a whole lot required of you to get this kind of data that will help millions of people in the future.

I look for them. I look for studies. I want to know what helps me. And if I can find out what helps me, then I can share that with someone else, but yet the research can go further than I go. Because they can provide the numbers, the data that say how it worked, what was effective, what did not work, how do we do this different in the future?

Without the research there could, lives could be lost. Instead I think lives will be saved. And that's why I will continue in different research programs. If I feel that the cause is worthy, I'll always volunteer.