Diabetic friend inspires Jacksons to make video

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A diabetic friend who wasn’t taking good care of herself is what inspired Bessie Rene Fontenot Jackson and Andy Jackson of Monroe to make their video, “Diabetes and You - Detection and Management.”

Bessie, who grew up in Mamou, is a graduate of Joseph Celestine High School. She is the daughter of the late Sidney Fontenot, Sr. and Ella Thomas Fontenot of Mamou. She is associate professor at Northeast Louisiana University in Monroe and a registered/licensed dietician with a Ph. D. in nutrition.

She and her husband started the project three years ago. She spent three months writing the script for her video, which was completed in February 1990.

"This video is a step-by-step method of dealing with diabetes and is designed to instruct with simplicity even the youngest of viewers on the four aspects of diabetes management," Bessie explains. "These four aspects are: 1) medication, as prescribed by a physician; 2) self-monitoring devices; 3) a moderate exercise plan; and 4) a diet plan, as outlined by a registered/licensed dietician or certified diabetes instructor."

The 18-minute video is "fast-moving so the viewer doesn't get bored," she stressed.

"Being in a health related area, I felt there was a need for this type of video. It's designed in simple terms," she added.

Bessie and Andy's video includes information about the history of diabetes and distinguishes between Types I and II.

Type I, as Bessie explained, refers to insulin-dependant diabetes, usually a juvenile onset disease. Type II, she notes, is non-insulin dependent and most often strikes adults.

The tape, which Bessie claims is very educational and entertaining, is easy to digest.

"More than 11 million people in the United States have diabetes," the dietician points out, "and at least half of them are unaware that they even have it."

"According to the Department of Health and Human Resources, there are approximately 260,000 Louisianans that have diabetes."

The Jacksons' film is targeted toward schools at every level. "We urge nursery schools, home economics departments, nutritionists, hospitals, diabetics and their families and even the general public to watch this tape," she said.
"The tape is good, simple and very informative," commented Mr. Elvin Reed of Mamou, who has watched the video.

B.B. King has recently endorsed the video. The legendary blues singer is a Type II diabetic and had these comments to say after he viewed the tape, "Sticking with my diet on the road was a problem because of the strenuous schedule. After watching the video, I realized I could choose the correct foods from restaurant menus and request that they be prepared in a specific manner, such as baking or broiling, as opposed to frying. I find the information to be current and easy to follow. I feel this video is a real hit," King noted.

"This is the first video we've done," Bessie mentioned, "and we are very pleased with the outcome."