

When the world turned upside down...you, and the American Kidney Fund, acted boldly

The American Kidney Fund (AKF) is fighting on all fronts—from prevention through post-transplant living. And for the 37 million people in the United States living with kidney disease, 2020 was a year like no other.

The COVID-19 pandemic created the greatest emergency for people living with kidney disease that AKF has seen in our half century of service to the community. When the world turned upside down, we didn't put things on hold—we turned to you, our supporters, to ensure we could continue serving the needs of this community. With your help, we kicked into high gear to meet the urgent and life-threatening needs of those with kidney disease.

Because of generous support from caring people and organizations, we were able to meet these unforeseen challenges with bold solutions—all while continuing the essential educational and advocacy programs patients count on. And when the economy crashed, AKF gave direct financial assistance to tens of thousands of lowincome dialysis and transplant patients.

We're grateful to you for being there for patients and the kidney community throughout this crisis. The lifesaving achievements you will read about in the pages that follow are YOUR achievements. We could not have done any of this without you.

Thank you for being at the center of the AKF community and for your shared commitment to our mission of fighting kidney disease and helping people live healthier lives.

Your Impact on the Kidney Community

13,000



Provided **Coronavirus Emergency Fund** grants to nearly 13,000 kidney patients—the only national program to provide emergency grants addressing the immediate needs of patients.

95,000



Provided direct financial assistance to nearly 95,000 low-income dialysis and transplant patients in every state and U.S. territory.

714



Trained 714 people to become Kidney Health Coaches—peer-to-peer community kidney disease educators. 1,615



Helped 1,615 low-income dialysis patients receive lifesaving transplants and post-transplant care. This represented 7% of all kidney transplants performed in the U.S. in 2020—a scope of assistance unparalleled in the nonprofit community.

206,000

Educated 206,000 people through webinars and professional education courses about living with kidney disease and caring for kidney patients. 16,000



Grew our Advocacy Network to more than 16,000 AKF Ambassadors, who worked on more than 100 state and federal bills of importance to the kidney community. **12**



In 2019–2020, 12 states enacted legislation spearheaded by AKF to remove barriers for living organ donors—laws which will ultimately shorten the transplant waiting list.

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17 million

Educated more than 17 million people through our award-winning website, KidneyFund.org.

15,000+⁽¹⁾

Launched a week-long virtual summit called Kidney Action Week, where we hosted more than 2,100 people and generated 15,000+ engagements through information sessions and other online activities focused on kidney disease education and prevention.

1.5 million

Provided kidney nutrition information and renal diet resources to 1.5 million people through Kidney Kitchen®, kitchen.KidneyFund.org.

26



Won 26 national awards recognizing our educational and advocacy resources.

Letter from the CEO



LaVarne A. Burton
President and CEO

Dear Friend.

I do not need to tell you that 2020 was an especially challenging year for our community. People living with kidney disease are at much higher risk for developing severe cases of COVID-19, and yet, dialysis appointments meant those with kidney failure could not stay home, even during the worst peaks of the pandemic. As job losses and financial stress swept across the country, kidney patients were faced with a dire situation.

I have always known our kidney community was resilient, but the pandemic proved it without any doubt. From patients and family members to donors and Ambassadors, our community pulled together to help those facing extra hardship.

Thanks to you, AKF was able to respond quickly and meet the needs of patients across the country. Of course, not all patients have access to the same resources and care. And people of color—especially Black Americans—face an especially high risk of kidney failure. By lifting up patient voices, supporting forward-thinking researchers and advocating to policymakers, we are making real strides in combatting racial health disparities through advocacy and inclusive research.

In the pages that follow, you will meet some inspiring people. Families who are overcoming incredible challenges and living full lives in spite of kidney disease; physicians who are creating brighter futures for kidney patients; and donors like you who make all our work possible.

During this very difficult year, I have been deeply grateful for your continued support. Thank you for your commitment to supporting people wherever they are in their fight against kidney disease—from prevention through post-transplant living.

With gratitude,

LaVarne A. Burton
President and CEO

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Letter from the Board Chair



Jerry D. Klepner Chair, American Kidney Fund Board of Trustees

Dear Friend,

Your trust means the world to us. That is why I am delighted to write to you today to report that your dollars are making a tangible difference in the fight against kidney disease. No other organization makes such a direct impact on the lives of people living with or at risk for kidney disease.

In 2020, I was especially proud of how we were able to collaborate with other organizations—joining forces to accomplish even more. New partnerships with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration, the American Heart Association, the American Diabetes Association, and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute allowed us to provide lifesaving information and resources to many more people at risk for chronic kidney disease.

There's one thing that didn't change during the tumultuous past year: with 97 cents of every donated dollar spent directly on patients and programs, you always know we're stewarding your gifts thoughtfully and effectively.

On behalf of American Kidney Fund Board of Trustees, thank you for your generosity and compassion. Working together, I know that we will one day achieve our vision of a world without kidney disease.

Jerry D. Klepner

Chair, American Kidney Fund Board of Trustees

Kidney Disease by the Numbers

1 in 9

Americans is living with kidney disease.

37 million

people in the United States are living with kidney disease.

3.4×

Black Americans are 3.4 times more likely to develop kidney failure than white Americans.

35%

Black Americans make up 13% of the U.S. population but account for 35% of Americans with kidney failure.

1.5×

Hispanics are 1.5 times more likely to develop kidney failure than non-Hispanics.

Top 10

Kidney disease is one of the top 10 causes of death in the U.S.

1 of 6

1 out of every 6 Americans on dialysis cannot afford the cost of care and turns to AKF for help.

93,000

93,000 people are on the waitlist for a kidney transplant, and in 2020, only 1 in 4 were able to get a transplant.









COVID-19

Rapid Response

AKF is the only kidney organization with a rapid response disaster relief program. So, when COVID-19 arrived, our generous community made it possible to quickly launch our **Coronavirus Emergency Fund**. Your support helped provide financial grants to thousands of patients in need. And, we worked tirelessly to provide the entire kidney community with the most up-to-date, scientifically sound information to help everyone stay safe.

For most dialysis patients, there is no option but to get in-person, in-center treatments three times a week. But the very treatments that keep them alive also put them at greater risk for exposure to COVID-19. It was a deadly catch-22. Tragically, one study found that 20% of patients on dialysis who were infected with COVID-19 did not survive.

We launched our Coronavirus Emergency Fund in March 2020, just as the nation was moving into lockdown. Not surprisingly, we were immediately overwhelmed with applications for assistance. By 3:30 p.m. on the first day, the initial \$300,000 we had allocated from our budget for these emergency grants was spoken for—an unprecedented volume of demand for our assistance. By the second day we had a waitlist more than double the funds we had set aside.

But we didn't lose heart—we knew you and your fellow AKF supporters would be there for those in need. Thanks to the generosity of more than 4,500 donors and 20 partner foundations and corporations, we provided nearly 13,000 patients with over \$3.1 million in grants!

In just the first two months after launching the Coronavirus Emergency Fund, AKF received a staggering 9,000 applications. But thanks to an unprecedented \$1.1 million gift from our friends at AstraZeneca, we were able to help every single patient on our waitlist!

	AKF and
	COVID-19
January 21, 2020	First confirmed case of COVID-19 found in the U.S.
March 13, 2020	National emergency declared in the U.S.
March 16, 2020	AKF transitions to remote work and virtual programming.
March 23, 2020	AKF launches Coronavirus Emergency Fund with a \$300,000 budget. All funds are spoken for by 3:30pm .
April 20, 2020	First 1,000 donors step up and donate to our Coronavirus Emergency Fund.
May 29, 2020	AstraZeneca commits \$1.1 million to the fund.
MAT	
ecember 31, 2020(Emergency Fund grants total more than \$3.1 million to nearly 13,000 kidney patients—and counting!
	6
<u>C.,</u>	

"AKF Has Been a Lifesaver"

Chika Nwerem, Coronavirus Emergency Fund Grant Recipient

I was diagnosed with kidney failure 17 years ago. When I got the news in 2020 that I'd be receiving a kidney transplant, I was overjoyed—no more home dialysis, no more nights spent cleaning and disinfecting the equipment. It felt like I was getting my life back.

But that joy vanished when my doctor told me I would need to take three months off of work. Because of the immunosuppressants necessary to keep my body from rejecting the new kidney, going to work simply wouldn't be safe. There was no way my family could survive without my income for that long.

I work in a nursing home, and I was already afraid of contracting COVID-19 on the job. The idea of working during a global health crisis with a suppressed immune system terrified me. I didn't know what I was going to do.

And then I heard about AKF's Coronavirus Emergency Fund. I applied right away. The grant from AKF helped to cover my family's expenses, so I could stay safe while I recovered from my transplant. If that money wasn't there, I would have had to put my life at risk just to pay the rent.

Now I tell everyone, "The kidney transplant saved my life, but the American Kidney Fund is a lifesaver as well."

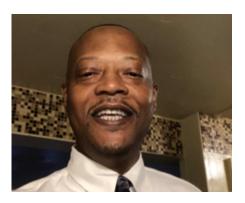
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"The grant from **AKF** helped to cover my family's expenses, so I could stay safe while I recovered from my transplant."







Fighting Kidney Disease — Virtually!

When the pandemic lockdown began in March, we mobilized to continue providing vital programs and services to our community. Thousands of people accessed our top-rated educational content and time-sensitive advocacy opportunities online in 2020. During our Virtual Fly-In, AKF Ambassadors met with members of Congress remotely to ensure our legislative priorities—especially the Living Donor Protection Act—were not forgotten.

Know Your Kidneys™

As many as 1 in 3 adults in the United States has a primary risk factor for chronic kidney disease. Our **Know Your Kidneys** program is focused on preventing and slowing the progression of kidney disease. In 2020, we reached high-risk populations through a variety of online resources including a web campaign, downloadable tools and webinars.

Kidney Kitchen

Coping with complex kidney diet recommendations is incredibly challenging for people with kidney disease, but diet can play a very significant role in patients' health. We continued to expand the nutritional resources available through our **Kidney Kitchen** website. With customized healthy eating tips for every stage of kidney disease and for specific dietary concerns such as phosphorus and potassium, visitors can learn how their diet impacts their health and access more than 500 delicious kidney-friendly recipes.

Kidney Action Summit Digital Advocacy Day

With in-person visits off the table, we had to get creative to keep kidney disease prevention top of mind in Congress. In July, two dozen AKF Ambassadors from 15 states and D.C. met with their legislators remotely to discuss our major legislative priorities: addressing health equity issues in kidney disease, helping patients cope with the financial burdens of kidney failure and making more transplants possible through living donor protections. AKF's Ambassadors helped to get passed the landmark lifetime immunosuppressant coverage bill that was signed into law at the end of 2020. This law ensures no transplant patient will lose the organ due to inability to pay for the anti-rejection drugs.

Kidney Action Week

When our on-the-ground prevention services halted in March, we pivoted our work to continue providing kidney disease prevention and education programs to our communities by launching **Kidney Action Week**. More than 2,100 people joined us for our first week-long virtual event with kidney-friendly cooking demonstrations, daily fitness activities, chats with nephrologists and dietitians, and other educational sessions. And our Kidney Action Week Congressional Briefing featured an all-star panel of health and policy experts discussing factors that have contributed to COVID-19's disproportionate impact on communities of color—the same communities most effected by kidney failure.



Even during the pandemic lockdowns, AKF continued the fight against kidney disease online.













Caring for People

with Kidney Disease

One out of every six dialysis patients—along with many transplant recipients—in the United States receives financial assistance from AKF. It's a cornerstone program that saves countless lives each year. But when COVID-19 job losses skyrocketed, AKF's financial assistance was an even more vital lifeline. We provided direct financial assistance to nearly 95,000 people with kidney failure through our Coronavirus Emergency Fund, Health Insurance Premium Program, Safety Net grants, Disaster Relief Program and other initiatives.

When COVID-19 job losses skyrocketed, AKF's financial assistance was an even more vital lifeline.

A Caring Family Legacy

When my grandfather, William Dessner, lost his battle with chronic kidney disease in 1973, his widow established the William B. Dessner Memorial Fund to help other people with the same affliction. For more than four decades, my grandmother Ruth Dessner and my uncle Gerald Dessner, fulfilled requests for assistance from kidney patients across the country. The two of them did all of the work and covered all of the expenses themselves: raising money, answering letters and sending hundreds of checks out to patients in need.

But that's not all. My uncle took time out of his busy work life on Wall Street to advocate for kidney patients. When New York State needed a kick in the pants to implement the new organ donor checkbox on state drivers' licenses, he sued on behalf of kidney patients—and won! Thanks to him thousands more lives have been saved through organ transplants.

When my grandmother and uncle passed away, my brother Daniel and I wanted to continue their legacy. We searched for an organization that would do for kidney patients what Ruth and Gerald had spent their lives doing. And we found the perfect match at AKF.

We granted the remaining funds from the Dessner Memorial Fund to AKF's Safety Net program. We were impressed with the AKF staff and their deep commitment to the patients they serve. It feels wonderful to know my family's legacy is in such good hands.

-Susan L. Dessner William B. Dessner Memorial Fund



Thanks to
Gerald Dessner
thousands
more lives have
been saved
through organ
transplants.

AKF provided funding for more than 100 kidney transplants every month in 2020.

Making Transplants Possible

AKF provided funding for 7% of all kidney transplants in the U.S. last year! That's more than 100 kidney transplants every single month. Our financial assistance makes it possible for low-income people to qualify for the transplant waiting list and go through the transplant process. But we don't walk away when the transplant is finished. We continue assisting patients with their health insurance premiums for the entire coverage year to make sure they can get back on their feet. And our educational resources are giving post-transplant patients the information they need to thrive and focus on their new lives.

In addition to sustaining our signature patient grants and programming, our advocacy team succeeded in getting landmark immunosuppressant health insurance coverage included in the large COVID-19 relief package that was signed into law in December 2020. From now on, transplant recipients nationwide who are under the age of 65 can receive lifetime Medicare coverage of their immunosuppressant drugs if they can't afford the medications. This law will help to ensure that patients do not lose their transplant due to inability to afford anti-rejection drugs.

Organ Donors Are Superheroes

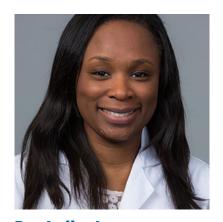
Transplants would not be possible without the bravery of organ donors. Deciding to donate a kidney is one of the most generous things a person can do. Donors are critically important because there are more than 93,000 people nationwide who are waiting for a kidney.

But protections for living donors vary depending on which state you live in. Where you live should not impact the ability to receive or donate a lifesaving organ. In 2020, AKF spearheaded legislation in 19 states to protect organ donors. Three states passed new protections for organ donors including job protected leave, tax credits or deductions for donor expenses, paid leave, and more, bringing to 12 the total number of states enacting this legislation since 2019. These new laws will make it easier for people to be organ donors—shortening the waiting list for everyone.

There are more than 93,000 people nationwide who are waiting for a kidney.

Advancing Kidney Disease Research

Meet our 2020 Clinical Scientist in Nephrology Fellows



Dr. Anika Lucas



Dr. Maria Clarissa Tio

AKF plays a unique role in the kidney research community by funding emerging scientists at a pivotal moment on the career path. In 2020, **Dr. Anika Lucas** and **Dr. Maria Clarissa Tio** joined a distinguished roster of more than 40 top nephrology researchers who received early-career support through AKF's Clinical Scientist in Nephrology fellowship program. We're proud to support innovative researchers whose work improves diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes for patients.

Dr. Lucas is studying pregnancy and kidney outcomes in women with systemic lupus erythematous, with a particular interest in racial disparities. Systemic lupus erythematosus is an autoimmune disease that can cause damage to the kidneys and other parts of the body. Her goal is to more accurately identify women who are at particularly high risk for poor pregnancy outcomes like preeclampsia, preterm birth, and fetal loss using kidney function.

Dr. Tio is studying oxalate—a substance found in many common foods like spinach and nuts—and how it impacts the kidneys. More and more studies are indicating that increased oxalate in a person's urine may be a risk factor for kidney disease. Dr. Tio hopes that her research will help determine new ways for people to prevent and slow kidney disease through their food choices.

The 2020 fellowships are funded by generous grants from the Hearst Foundation, Amgen, Inc. and a family foundation's anonymous donation.

Moving Our Field Forward

Dr. Anika Lucas, Clinical Scientist in Nephrology Fellow

Like many health issues in America, kidney disease disproportionately affects Black people, indigenous people and other people of color. As a Black nephrologist, I've been afforded a great responsibility: to not only improve the lives of patients, but the lives of my friends and family members.

When I discovered the nephrology community, I recognized the opportunity to help people of color, who disproportionately carry the burden of kidney disease, to manage their chronic illness.

I simply would not be where I am in my career today without AKF. The organization did more than provide financial support, they connected me with leading experts in nephrology who have become my mentors and collaborators.

My team and I are interested in understanding how bias, social determinants of health and systemic racism contribute to disparities in kidney outcomes. For example, studies show people of color are less likely to receive pre-dialysis care than white patients. Addressing these types of inequities is critical if we want to prevent end-stage kidney disease. I'm passionate about helping our field address these issues.

We all feel hopeful about research breakthroughs and new treatments. For example, sodium glucose cotransporter 2 inhibitors, well-known diabetic medicine is currently has been shown to slow the progression of kidney disease. Ultimately, though, if we are going to eradicate kidney disease, we also need to recognize and study the role discrimination and social determinants of health in health outcomes. I'm forever grateful to AKF for this opportunity to advance my career and continue to focus on reducing health disparities.

Kidney disease disproportionately affects
Black people, indigenous people and
other people of color.

Driving Innovation at the Unknown Causes of Kidney Disease Summit

Every person living with kidney failure deserves to know what caused it. Yet far too many people never get a definitive diagnosis for the root cause of their kidney failure. Undiagnosed or misdiagnosed kidney disease can lead to missteps in treatment and poor health outcomes. In December 2020, more than 100 medical leaders, patient advocates and researchers came together at AKF's Unknown Causes of Kidney Disease Summit. By putting some of the brightest minds in the same virtual "room," the Summit spurred innovation in research, diagnosis and treatment of the underlying causes of kidney disease.

Leadership sponsors

Natera

- Otsuka America Pharmaceutical, Inc.
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 Alexion Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

Supporting sponsor

Travere Therapeutics

By putting some of the brightest minds in the same virtual "room," the Summit spurred innovation in research, diagnosis and treatment of the underlying causes of kidney disease.

Sharing Research Breakthroughs

AKF 2020 Conference Presentations

At AKF, we know it's not enough just to fund and conduct research into kidney disease. We need to share important research findings with the medical community and the public. Here are just a few of the key papers we presented in 2020 to the medical, nutrition and public health communities:

- Bringing the joy back to food for kidney disease patients
 Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo
- Demonstrating charitable premium assistance as a mechanism for overcoming the cost barrier to transplant for low-income Americans
 American Society of Nephrology Annual Conference
- Expanding diabetes self-management education to include chronic kidney disease

American Diabetes Association 80th Scientific Sessions

- Renal patient and caregiver perspectives on clinical trial participation
 American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Expo
- Hypertensive crises among older and younger community-based blood pressure screening participants

American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Expo

At AKF, we know it's not enough just to fund and conduct research into kidney disease. We need to share important research findings with the medical community and the public.



With you by our side, we're tackling a packed agenda in 2021. AKF has long understood the importance of prioritizing the populations hardest hit by kidney disease in our work, especially Black people and other people of color. Over the past year, there has been a growing chorus of voices calling on our leaders and the medical establishment to address racial health disparities and create a more equitable, accessible, and inclusive health care system. We're using this momentum to tackle these disparities head-on.

Here are a few of our top priorities in the months ahead:



Increasing diversity in clinical trials. We're ramping up our work to encourage people of color to enroll in clinical trials. Black people, Hispanic people and women are frequently underrepresented in clinical trials due to a lack of trust in the medical establishment and historical, deliberate exclusion by those conducting the trials.

We're helping patients overcome these barriers. More diverse trail participants will yield more complete information—and ultimately lead to better patient care and outcomes.

Expanding access to transplants. After years of work, we recently helped pass landmark legislation that will expand transplant access and improve post-transplant life. This legislation will include living donor and anti-discrimination protections for kidney patients—and ease the process of eligibility and qualifications within minority communities. It will even provide lifetime immunosuppressant coverage to transplant recipients who can't afford their anti-rejection medications. Now, we're working to ensure this bill is implemented fully and on schedule.

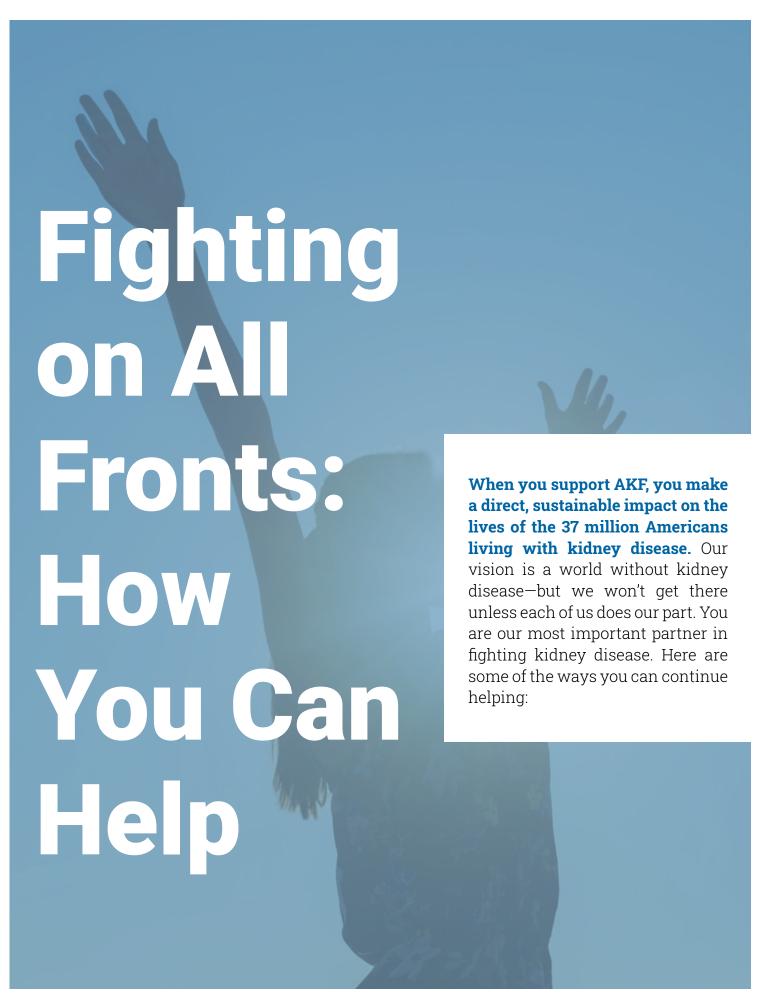
Growing the use of home dialysis. Home dialysis can make a huge improvement in patients' lives. Patients can have treatments on their own schedule, even while sleeping, instead of trekking to a dialysis center. That means more time to live life to the fullest. However, Black Americans are seriously underrepresented among home dialysis users. We're reaching out to our grant recipients with information and resources on home dialysis to help expand access to this treatment option.

Continuing to protect people with kidney disease from COVID-19 and fighting for equal access to vaccines. AKF worked with the Biden-Harris administration to secure vaccine distribution to the nation's dialysis clinics. This allowed for rapid vaccinations to save lives among kidney patients, who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19. We are continuing to fight for equal access to the vaccine while conducting a campaign to combat vaccine hesitancy in the kidney community.

Preventing and educating in communities of color. Black and Hispanic Americans are at much higher risk of kidney failure compared to white Americans. AKF is expanding our outreach and resources in these communities to educate them on chronic kidney disease and managing risk factors, including diabetes and high blood pressure.

Partnering with national organizations. We will continue developing strategic alliances and partnerships with other organizations to help us achieve greater impact. Our partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration will remain vitally important in our work of reaching Veterans—a population that faces higher rates of kidney disease compared to the general public.

AKF has long understood the importance of prioritizing the populations hardest hit by kidney disease in our work, especially Black people and other people of color.



Become a Monthly Giver

Giving monthly is the best way to provide steady support for the ongoing work at AKF. It allows you to spread your donations throughout the year, providing AKF with a dependable base of support and helping us continue being there for patients when they need us most. Give monthly and join our Partners for Change sustainer program at **KidneyFund.org/donate**.

Leave a Lasting Gift to Fight Kidney Disease

Leaving a gift to charity is a wonderful way to make a lasting mark on the world. Many AKF donors have decided to leave a gift in their will, trust or by beneficiary designation. It's one way to have an even bigger impact—and there is no minimum gift. Our philanthropy team can help you create a plan to provide for your family and the causes you care about. To learn more, visit **KidneyFund.MyPlannedGift.org**.

Join KidneyNation

There are 37 million Americans living with kidney disease who need our support. You can host your own fundraiser for AKF by joining KidneyNation—our online fundraising community. Your fundraising efforts will directly help patients in need and people at risk for kidney disease. Your passion, creativity and story can make a big impact. Visit **KidneyNation.org** to join the fun!

Donate a Vehicle

For a kidney failure patient who needs to get dialysis treatment three times a week, a vehicle is their lifeline. We invite you to donate your vehicle to AKF when you decide it no longer fits your lifestyle. Let your old car, truck or even RV be the reason someone with kidney disease can continue to live a full life. Visit **KidneyFund.org/car** for more information.

Join our Advocacy Network

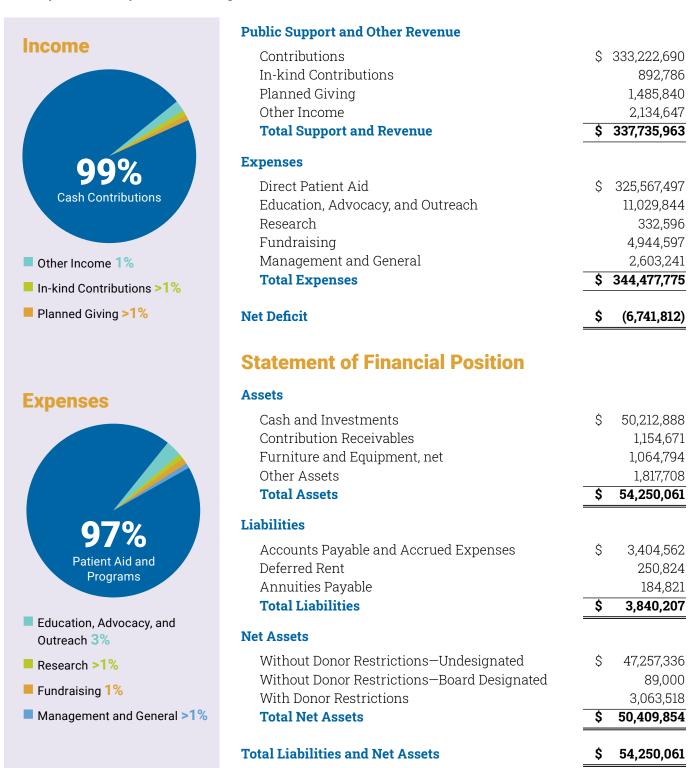
Lasting change that can impact millions of lives at once requires changing public policy. Join more than 16,000 passionate patients, loved ones, living organ donors and kidney care professionals who are making their voices heard as AKF Ambassadors. You can make a difference by reaching out to your elected officials in Congress, state legislatures and your own local community. Join us today at **KidneyFund.org/ambassadors**. One voice makes a difference, but a collective voice is even louder.

Share Your Story

The story behind why you give to AKF will help inspire others to follow your thoughtful example. Please contact **KidneyFund.org/donorstory** if you would like to be recognized for your generosity and help grow our AKF community in the fight against kidney disease.

Financial Highlights

Fiscal year January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020



A complete copy of the audited financial statements is available upon request from the American Kidney Fund, 11921 Rockville Pike, Suite 300, Rockville, MD, 20852, or on our website at KidneyFund.org.

Corporate Partners

The following sponsors supported the programs and services of the American Kidney Fund with generous contributions of \$5,000 or more in 2020.

\$1,000,000+

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Members of the Circle of Champions have made a minimum annual investment of \$250 in the American Kidney Fund. This gift represents a steadfast commitment to the patients we serve, and we are grateful for your support.

\$10,000+

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The Heritage Society recognizes friends of American Kidney Fund who have either funded or planned a deferred gift, such as a bequest or life income plan, in 2020.

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KidneyNation

Thank you to the following individuals who joined KidneyNation and raised money through do-it-yourself fundraising to support our lifesaving work. These individuals raised a minimum of \$1,000 each in 2020.

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