

Proposal requesting support for the

**National Kidney Foundation of Northern California's  
*Healthy Kidneys for Life* Program**

**Summary**

More than 20 million people in the United States suffer from diseases of the kidney and urinary tract. In many cases these diseases are preventable through healthy lifestyle choices, or treatable if detected at an early stage. The NKF of NC's *Healthy Kidneys for Life* program is designed to educate fifth graders in Northern California, and especially those children who come from ethnic backgrounds with statistically high rates of kidney disease and failure. The program focuses on kidney disease and its warning signs, as well as the healthy lifestyle choices that can help to prevent it. The program also screens children for hypertension (high blood pressure), a leading risk-factor for kidney disease, and offers informational materials, follow-up with parents, and vouchers for free medical examinations to those children showing signs of hypertension.

The *Healthy Kidneys for Life* program currently serves more than 1,400 children each year in Alameda County and San Jose, where the incidence of kidney disease is highest in Northern California. The current budget for the program is \$36,050 per year. The NKF of NC is currently seeking support both for programming in Alameda and San Jose areas and funding to expand the program into other areas in the Northern California region where the ethnicity of the student population indicates higher rates of risk for developing kidney disease.

***Healthy Kidneys for Life* Community Need**

Approximately 20 million people in the United States suffer from diseases of the kidney and urinary tract. Of this number, more than 300,000 experience kidney failure and require dialysis or transplantation in order to live. Today, kidney disease is the ninth leading cause of death in the United States; one in nine Americans has some level of kidney damage. Contributing to these statistics are figures showing that racial minorities, particularly African Americans, are disproportionately affected by kidney disease. While African Americans comprise only 12 percent of the nation's total population, they account for 32 percent of patients with kidney disease in the United States. Factors contributing to kidney disease, such as diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure), are also disproportionately high among African Americans when compared to their incidence among Caucasians. In Northern California, the incidence of kidney failure is highest in communities with large minority populations, such as Alameda County and areas of San Francisco and San Jose.

In many cases, factors contributing to kidney disease, such as diabetes and hypertension, may be preventable through healthy lifestyle choices that involve diet, exercise, and limiting or avoiding drug use/abuse. Because prevention is possible, education can be a powerful weapon in fighting kidney disease. The NKF of NC's *Healthy Kidneys for Life*

program aims to introduce the issues of kidney disease and its risks factors and the proactive lifestyle choices that can reduce these risks to children at an early age, when preventative measures and education can have the greatest impact.

### **About the Program**

The *Healthy Kidneys for Life* program has been in existence for 10 years and has served approximately 17,200 children during that time. Presented in the classroom by NKF of NC volunteers and/or staff, the *Healthy Kidneys for Life* program introduces the concepts of kidney health and disease prevention to children at an early age. In addition, the program provides an initial screening for hypertension and offers take-home informational materials and, if necessary, referrals to local medical professionals for follow-up.

The program is comprised of an in-class presentation and video which focus on the function of the kidneys; healthy diet, exercise, personal hygiene, and drug/medication use choices; risk factors, such as diabetes and hypertension and their relationship to kidney disease; kidney disease treatments; and the importance of organ donation. During the presentation and video, a second NKF of NC volunteer administers blood pressure screenings to the students. Following the video, presentation, and blood pressure screening, students are encouraged to participate in an interactive discussion. Students also receive a story book that reiterates the points from the in-class presentation and tests what they have learned. A copy of the *Healthy Kidneys for Life* book is included with this proposal.

While the in-class presentation takes about 45 minutes and is completed in one class period, the *Healthy Kidneys for Life* program also includes a number of follow-up elements. Teachers receive a presentation packet that includes suggested follow-up and supplementary activities and informational high-blood pressure packets for distribution to students identified with high blood pressure. Teachers may use these materials to reinforce the presentation and answer additional questions the students may have. Outside of the classroom, parents of students may also be educated about kidney disease through the information distributed to each student. This material is available in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese and Tagalog.

The most important and thorough follow-up elements of the *Healthy Kidneys for Life* program address those students identified as hypertensive during their in-class screening. Following the program, these students are referred to their school nurse for a second blood pressure reading and, if their readings are still elevated, have an informational packet sent to their families. Each packet includes a letter notifying parents of the screening results, a brochure about the health risks posed by high blood pressure, a voucher to see a physician at a local clinic for follow-up (paid for by the NKF), and response cards allowing families to participate in follow-up evaluations at six, twelve, eighteen and twenty-four months.

## **Program Goals**

The immediate goals of the *Healthy Kidneys for Life* program are straightforward: to provide the children who are most at-risk for developing kidney disease a head start in preventing it through early education, screening, and when necessary, early medical intervention and monitoring. The threat kidney disease poses to public health in Northern California continues to grow: over the past fifteen years the number of dialysis patients alone has more than tripled, with projections predicting that this number will continue to climb in the years to come. Early preventative education programs like *Healthy Kidneys for Life* can have a demonstrable effect on a child's future health by introducing at an early age the concepts of kidney health and healthy lifestyle choices. In addition, the program encourages early medical contact and follow-up for those children already displaying warning signs for kidney disease. A number of studies have shown that early medical contact and patient education are crucial to both prevention and kidney disease management.

## **Budget**

The total budget for programming during the current school year is \$36,050 and will fund programs serving approximately 1,400 children in the San Jose and Oakland school districts. This cost covers program materials, administration, volunteer recruitment and training, travel and outreach expenses. Like all of the NKF of NC's public education programs, *Healthy Kidneys for Life* is offered free of charge and relies on the support of philanthropic individuals, corporations and foundations for its support.

## **Conclusion**

As kidney disease touches the lives of more and more families in the region, the need for all the NKF of NC's programs continues to expand. In order to meet this increased demand, the NKF of NC is reaching out to partners in the community to ensure that its programs make the greatest possible impact. For more than a decade, the *Healthy Kidneys for Life* program has served children in Alameda County, an area where approximately 70 percent of the student population is at increased risk for kidney disease, and San Jose, where nearly half of all students are at increased risk. By supporting *Healthy Kidneys for Life*, you help ensure that this important and potentially lifesaving preventative education program will continue to reach children in these areas and expand in to new areas, and help new children, in the years to come.