

13th Annual American Kidney Fund Gala, The Hope Affair, Honors 50 Years of Fighting Kidney Disease While Forging the Path Ahead



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The American Kidney Fund (AKF) will host its 13th annual gala, The Hope Affair, on Wednesday, Oct. 20, at 7:30 p.m. ET. The event—virtual again this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic—will bring together patients, families, caregivers and the renal community in the only national event of its kind. The Hope Affair celebrates the inspirational individuals who fight kidney disease every day, as well as the family caregivers and health professionals who take care of them.

This special online event is free and open to all who wish to attend; advance registration is required at TheHopeAffair.org.

The theme for this year's The Hope Affair is *Honoring the Past. Forging the Future.*, a fitting way to highlight this moment in AKF's history as the organization celebrates its 50th anniversary. After 50 years of fighting kidney disease and helping people live healthier lives, AKF is both looking back with pride on its past achievements and reflecting on its vision for the future.

The Hope Affair will be emceed by Emmy Award-winning news anchor Shawn Yancy. This event provides an opportunity to recognize the people at the heart of AKF's work, without whom a milestone anniversary would not be possible, including this year's honorees:

- Leigh-Ann Williams, an **AKF Ambassador** and **Kidney Health Coach** from New Orleans, is the 2021 AKF Hero of Hope. While undergoing dialysis at home, Leigh-Ann has continued working, traveling and pursuing her education, recently earning her Masters in Public Health from Louisiana State University. She shares AKF's commitment to reducing health disparities that lead to high rates of kidney failure and other chronic diseases in communities of color. As an AKF Ambassador, Leigh-Ann has advocated on Capitol Hill for kidney patients across the country.
- Jeremy Smith of Brooklyn is the recipient of the 2021 **KidneyNation** Excellence Award. Jeremy took advantage of the COVID-19 lockdowns last year to change his entire lifestyle and become his healthiest in preparation for giving the gift of life. He donated his kidney to his brother, Drew, in October 2020. Not only did Jeremy fly across the

country for the surgery, but he also raised more than \$12,100 for AKF's programs and services through KidneyNation, AKF's do-it-yourself fundraising program.

- Sadallah Alhaj, a sixth grader from Philadelphia, is the 2021 AKF Calendar Kids Cover Artist. Born without functioning kidneys, Sadallah had a kidney transplant at age two that lasted for eight years, and he is now back on dialysis three times a week. His artwork, *Fishing for a Kidney*, received the most votes from the public during this year's contest and will be featured on the cover of AKF's 2022 calendar.

"The Hope Affair is a wonderful chance to celebrate the positive progress for those living with kidney disease," said LaVarne A. Burton, AKF President and CEO. "This year, the event provides further opportunity for reflection as we look at that progress not just in this past year, but in the 50 years since AKF was founded. With the help of passionate, dedicated and inspiring people like Leigh-Ann, Jeremy and Sadallah, the American Kidney Fund will proudly continue to fight on all fronts, for every American impacted by kidney disease for the next 50 years – and beyond."

Proceeds raised through The Hope Affair will support AKF's prevention, early detection, financial support, disease management, clinical research, innovation and advocacy programs.

The Hope Affair 2021 is made possible thanks to generous lead support from Diamond Sponsor Akebia Therapeutics and Gold Sponsor Amgen, along with many other corporate and individual supporters. A full sponsor listing can be found at TheHopeAffair.org.

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About the American Kidney Fund

The American Kidney Fund (AKF) fights kidney disease on all fronts as the nation's leading kidney nonprofit. AKF works on behalf of the 37 million Americans living with kidney disease, and the millions more at risk, with an unmatched scope of programs that support people wherever they are in their fight against kidney disease—from prevention through transplant. With programs that address early detection, disease management, financial assistance, clinical research, innovation and advocacy, no kidney organization impacts more lives than AKF. AKF is one of the nation's top-rated nonprofits, investing 97 cents of every donated dollar in programs, and holds the highest 4-Star rating from Charity Navigator and the Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar.

For more information, please visit KidneyFund.org, or connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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