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The National Kidney Foundation of Arizona is committed to prevention of kidney disease through awareness, education, research, and to also improve the quality of life for Arizonans with kidney disease. AFM interviews CEO Jeffrey Neff to learn more about the National Kidney Foundation's goal of providing care, education, and hope.

AFM: Tell us a little more about the National Kidney Foundation of Arizona.

JN: For the past 51 years, we have been improving the quality of life for Arizona residents with kidney disease. We work with everything from transplants and organ donations, to taking patients to their dialysis appointments. We help people coping with this disease in any way that we can, including such things like paying the rent or mortgage for someone suffering from this disease because they are unable to work. Our goals as an organization are to provide care for these people, educate others to raise awareness of this silent disease, and encourage a whole-body healthy lifestyle.

AFM: What is a special project the Foundation is working on in 2014?

JN: We have been newly refreshing our Erma Bombeck Project. This project aims to narrow the gap between those who are in necessity of a kidney transplant, and the amount of kidneys available. This project is also dedicated to providing facts and knowledgeable sources to help save someone's life- from registering to be an organ donor, to considering gifting someone with a kidney donation. Ninety percent of people with kidney disease will not know they have it, and an average of 600,000 Arizonans suffer from it whether knowingly or not. However, optimism was what inspired Erma, a newspaper columnist, to fight through her battle, and we are eternally grateful for the friends and family of Erma because it is their gifts to the Erma Bombeck Memorial Fund that have kept this important project funded. The gift of life is something that she truly believed in.

AFM: What are some upcoming events for the National Kidney Foundation of Arizona?

JN: March is known as "World Kidney Month," which is very important to us. We visit companies all around Arizona and speak about kidney disease and how healthy living can prevent it. We educate people to learn more about their kidneys because kidney disease has no symptoms until it has greatly progressed. We will offer free screenings to anyone at most risk for kidney disease, like those who have diabetes, high blood pressure or a family history of kidney failure. We will also host a Live Twitter Chat with Dr. Joseph Vassolotti, our Chief Medical Officer, regarding kidney Q&A on World Kidney Day, March 14. Use the #WorldKidneyDayNKF to ask your questions. We will also have a Dietician available to answer questions on what to eat to keep your kidneys healthy. And, as always, we are excited about our annual walk on April 6 at Chase Field!

To learn more, please visit the following websites:

www.azkidney.org

www.kidney.org

www.twitter.com/nkf