



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Heroes Helping Heroes During National Kidney Month

*The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's new alliance helps firefighters and families of fallen firefighters waiting for a lifesaving kidney transplant*

Emmitsburg, Md, March 26, 2024 - The [National Fallen Firefighters Foundation](#), (NFFF) and its affiliate, the [First Responder Center for Excellence](#) (FRCE), are partnering with [Kidneys for Communities](#) to empower first responder communities across the country to help fallen firefighters' families and others in the firefighter community who are in need of a lifesaving kidney transplant.

[Expand Your Legacy](#) — a campaign developed by NFFF/FRCE and the [Knox Company](#) to build awareness among firefighters about the life-changing impact of becoming a living kidney donor — is working with Kidneys for Communities, a national community-directed living kidney donation program, to facilitate living kidney donations that support fallen firefighters' families and members of the firefighting community who are battling end-stage kidney disease.

Kidneys for Communities harnesses the power of membership-based organizations such as NFFF/FRCE and its partners through its [Kidneys for First Responders](#) initiative, which connects those who want to support firefighters, emergency medical service providers, and law enforcement officers by facilitating a living kidney donation.

Teaming up with Kidneys for Communities and its Kidneys for First Responders initiative, NFFF/FRCE will provide a clear pathway to support through the community-directed living donation program — and directly help those in desperate need of a kidney transplant.

“Expand Your Legacy began as an awareness campaign to recognize the courageous and compassionate acts of those who donate their lifesaving kidney,” said NFFF CEO Victor Stagnaro. “Now, through our collaborative work with Kidneys for Communities, we can extend a helping hand to those in the First Responder community who are in desperate need of a kidney transplant—connecting them with people who want to expand their legacy beyond their already significant contributions to public safety by donating their kidney.”

The Kidneys for First Responders initiative has helped facilitate donations such as one to a New York Police Department officer, which was initiated when an altruistic donor committed their kidney donation to support a police officer in the United States. Since its launch, Kidneys for First Responders has been assisting several first responders and their family members in need of a kidney transplant.

“It can be difficult to ask a stranger or even friends and family members to donate a kidney. Successfully finding a kidney donor requires the recipient to reach deep into their network of connections to make a big request,” said Atul Agnihotri, CEO of Kidneys for Communities. “We are connecting people through the power of a common cause — those who want to help firefighters and their families and those in need of a kidney transplant within the first responder community.”

Killing more people than breast cancer or prostate cancer, kidney disease has, in recent years, been named by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a leading cause of death in the U.S. CDC data shows that kidney disease affects an estimated 35.5 million people in the U.S., and approximately

90% of those with kidney disease don't know they have it. Meanwhile, the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network reports that approximately 13 people die each day waiting for a kidney transplant.

“Combining Expand Your Legacy with the Kidneys for First Responders initiative gives us the momentum we need to shorten the critical waiting time for firefighters who have served their communities, and for their family members who need a lifesaving kidney transplant,” said Neal Zipser, industry affairs manager for Knox. “This issue is close to all of us at Knox, as the president of our company, Joni Trempala, needs a kidney transplant. We initially developed the Expand Your Legacy campaign to support Joni on her journey, but it became evident to us very quickly that many first responders needed a kidney themselves. We hope this program helps those first responders who need kidneys to receive one and that others can become more educated about becoming a living kidney donor.”

### **About the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation**

Created by Congress, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's mission is to honor America's fallen fire heroes; support their families, colleagues, and organizations; and work to reduce preventable firefighter death and injury. Throughout the year, the Foundation undertakes a wide range of mission-driven activities in support of Fire Hero Families, fire departments, and the fire service overall. Learn more: [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org)

### **About the Knox Company**

Since 1975, the Knox Company has successfully developed innovative rapid access solutions for first responders and fire and life safety executives with products that provide fast, safe, and secure entry into commercial, industrial, educational and residential properties, while minimizing damage and maximizing safety. Today, more than 15,000 fire, EMS, and law enforcement departments/agencies, as well as schools, universities and corporations, depend on Knox products to gain access into over 1 million buildings/properties and to protect their most critical assets. For more information, go to [www.KnoxBox.com](http://www.KnoxBox.com).

### **About the First Responder Center for Excellence**

The FRCE is a National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) affiliate organization, created in 2016. Its mission is to promote quality educational awareness and research to reduce physical and psychological health and wellness issues for first responders.

### **About Kidneys for Communities**

Kidneys for Communities is a nonprofit that partners with organizations to impact the lives of their members by offering resources about living kidney donations to members of their communities, increasing the chances of a donor directing a gift-of-life kidney to a fellow member in need of a kidney. Addressing the shortage of living kidney donors through proactive community outreach programs, Kidneys for Communities developed the first-ever national community-directed donation program. The program unlocks connections created through membership-based communities, with the goal of increasing the number of living kidney donors in the U.S. through paired kidney exchange.

The Kidneys for Communities leadership team includes innovative leaders, kidney donors, social workers and medical experts in the fields of nephrology and renal transplantation — all of whom have seen this disease up close and are committed to making an impact.

To find out more about how to help first responders who need a kidney transplant, visit [kidneysforcommunities.org/first-responders/](http://kidneysforcommunities.org/first-responders/).