



# Fighting INFLUENZA



Official News from Families Fighting Flu

## Fall 2019 eNewsletter



### Message from our Chief Operating Officer

Flu season has officially started in the U.S. and our mission at Families Fighting Flu (FFF) remains the same - to reduce flu-related hospitalizations and deaths across the lifespan through education and advocacy. Sadly, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have already reported **two flu-related pediatric deaths for the 2019-2020 season**, and the 2018-2019 total currently stands at 142. And according to the CDC, upwards of 61,200 people lost their lives to flu during the 2018-2019 season.

Our objectives for the 2019-2020 flu season are to continue illustrating disease burden by sharing our family stories and to focus on the benefits of annual flu vaccination for everyone six months and older. To accomplish this goal, we are continuing to expand our strategic partnerships with organizations such as the **National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, Clorox, Kaiser Permanente, Rhode Island Department of Health, and Sioux Falls Area Immunization Coalition**, among others.

This season, we're proud to announce our new **Flu Champion program** that strives to reach people at the community level. As always, FFF will continue to educate and advocate at the national level through various initiatives and communication channels, but we realize that efforts to raise awareness and increase vaccine confidence start at the community level.

As always, please feel free to reach out to us as we welcome your involvement, feedback, and support! Wishing all of you a healthy and happy holiday season!

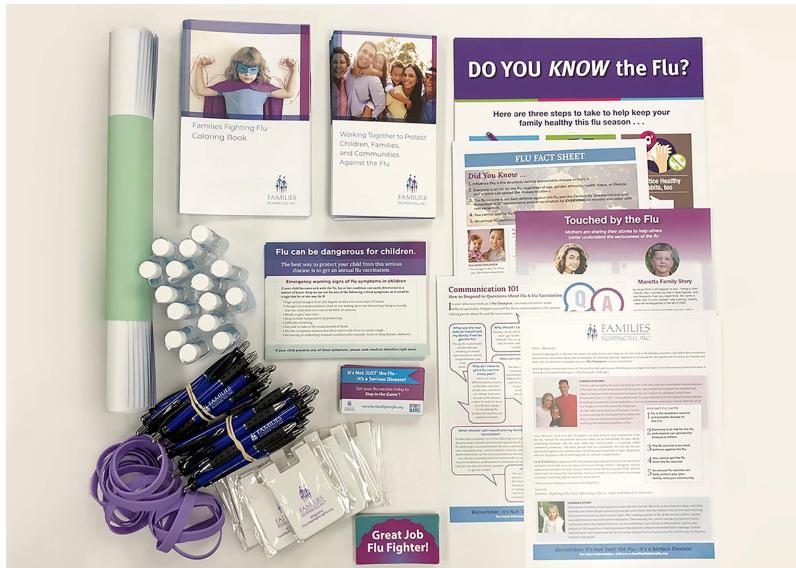
Sincerely,

*Serene A. Marotta*

### New Flu Champion Program

Our Flu Champion program aims to raise flu awareness at the **community level**! As part of this program, FFF has developed four different advocacy toolkits for **schools & universities, healthcare professionals, employers & community organizations**, and **individual advocates**. These turn-key toolkits contain an assortment of educational materials and promotional items to help advocates raise awareness about disease burden and the benefits of annual flu vaccination.

Interested? Check out these [toolkits](#) on the FFF website. And below, read just a few accounts of the advocacy work we've already accomplished this season!



## Flu Champion Profile: Angie Wehrkamp

As a Flu Champion, FFF Board member, and someone who lost a child to flu, Angie is working in her local community of Sioux Falls, South Dakota to raise awareness about the seriousness of flu and the importance of annual flu vaccination.

As part of her community efforts, Angie is spearheading a co-branded awareness campaign for FFF and the **Sioux Falls Area Immunization Coalition** for local daycare facilities. As part of this effort, daycare providers are provided with educational materials and a social media toolkit. They also just held the inaugural Sioux Falls *Fight the Flu* 5K where Angie handed out educational materials to local community members.

Angie recently participated in two live speaking events, including the Sioux Falls Area Immunization Coalition conference on Oct. 11th and a press conference for the **North Dakota Department of Health** in Bismarck, North Dakota on Sept. 24th, which resulted in local media coverage. She even posed for a **#FluShotSelfie** with **ND Governor Doug Burgum** and **Brad Hawk from the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission**!

## Flu Champion Profile: The Stein Family

Michelle and Doug Stein lost their four-year-old niece, Jessica, to the flu and now help promote flu awareness and prevention in their local community of Holly Springs, North Carolina. At their fundraising event in October, they teamed up with **Bombshell Beer Company** and the **Holly Springs Pharmacy** to promote flu



education and as a result, over 20 people received their annual flu vaccine at the event!



## Flu Champion Profile: Samy Awwad

Samy is an ambitious 16-year-old high school student who has made it his mission to educate his peers about infectious diseases! Samy lives in **Humboldt County, California**, which has one of the **lowest school vaccination rates in the state**. As a Flu Champion, Samy is working within his school and community to conduct educational workshops to educate his peers about the seriousness of flu and the importance of annual flu vaccination, even for healthy teenagers. Samy even started his own non-profit organization focused on infectious diseases called **ImmuniGlobal**, and was recently featured in a **Healthline** article!

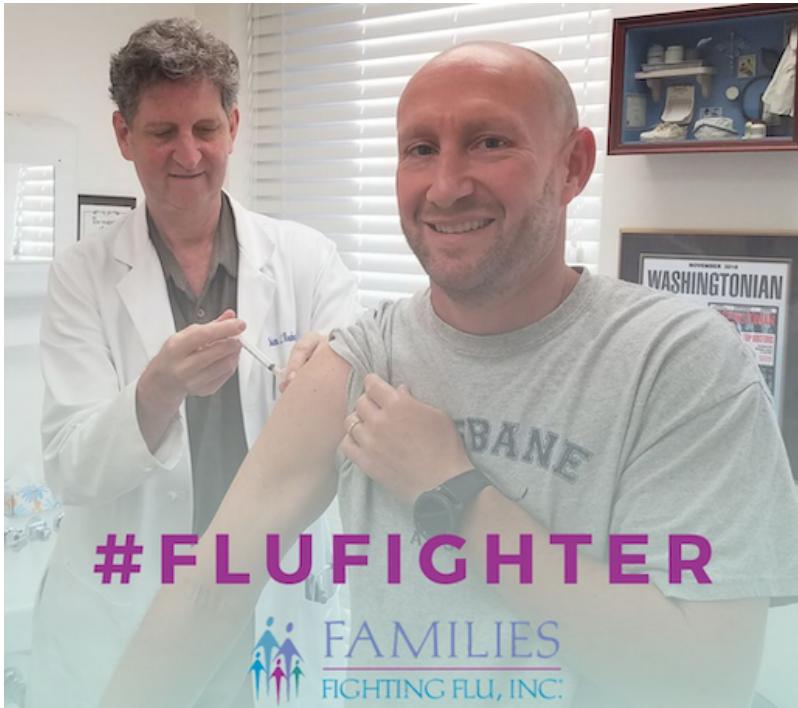
## Collaboration with RI Department of Health & The Wellness Company

As part of our new Flu Champion program, in addition to working with individual advocates, FFF is also working with like-minded organizations and partners to raise awareness about disease burden and the benefits of annual flu vaccination. This season, FFF is piloting a new initiative with the **Rhode Island Department of Health** (RIDOH) and **The Wellness Company** and their 200+ statewide school-located flu clinics using educational resources and co-branded materials to help increase flu vaccination rates. As part of this pilot program for high schools, students are encouraged to sport a FFF bracelet and share their #FluShotSelfie. To date, the RIDOH and The Wellness Company have seen an **increase statewide in flu vaccinations**, including an increase of **30%** at one clinic!



---

## #FluFighter Social & Digital Media Campaign



FFF continues to encourage everyone six months and older to receive an annual flu vaccine, consistent with the CDC recommendation. To help promote this effort, FFF started a social media campaign to engage healthcare professionals and advocates to lead by example and share their own **#FluShotSelfie!** Several FFF family members, including Bethany Drapeau, Chris Miller, Henry Lin, Gary Stein, Angie Wehrkamp, and Serese Marotta, were also profiled by the CDC as **Public Flu Fighters**. You can read their personal accounts of why annual flu vaccination is important to them on the CDC website [here](#).

---

## Lunch & Learn Webinar

On behalf of the **North Dakota Department of Health**, FFF conducted a webinar for healthcare professionals in North Dakota on September 11th. The webinar focused

on the importance of flu awareness and prevention, and included discussions related to disease burden, flu vaccine advocacy tools and techniques, and the importance of personal stories as part of narrative communication.



---

## New Family Stories



Stories are 22 times more memorable than statistics. That's why our stories of flu-related hospitalization and death are so effective in motivating people to vaccinate.

We've recently added three new stories to our ever-growing [Story Gallery](#) in an effort to illustrate how flu impacts people of all ages and ethnicities. We've also memorialized many of our loved ones with videos that now appear on our growing [YouTube](#) channel.

**If you or someone you know has a flu story to share, please reach out to us.**

---

## Speaking Engagements & Earned Media

This fall, FFF advocates have participated in several live speaking engagements and garnered multiple media interviews, reaching thousands of people with key flu-related messages through print publications and broadcast.

### Speaking Engagements:

- Aug./Sept. 2019: Presented at multiple events for the Arlington County Government, Immunization Department
- Sept. 5, 2019: Participated in a podcast with *Influential Motherhood*
- Sept. 14, 2019: "*How to Increase Maternal Influenza Vaccination Uptake: A Patient Perspective*" presented at the International Neonatal and Maternal Immunization Summit in Vancouver, British Columbia
- Sept. 24, 2019: "*The Story of Gianna Wehrkamp*" presented at the North Dakota Department of Health press conference in Bismarck, North Dakota

- Oct. 10, 2019: Presented at the Sioux Falls Area Immunization Coalition conference in Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- Oct. 24, 2019: Presented at the Texas Immunization Conference in Addison, Texas

#### **Print Publications:**

- Aug. 21, 2019, Healthline: "[How the Debate Over Child Vaccinations Is Dividing Parents](#)"
- Sept. 4, 2019, MediaPlanet USA: "[Keeping Flu out of School Is as Easy as 1-2-3!](#)"
- Sept. 24, 2019, Bismarck Tribune: "[Parent, health officials urge vaccination against 'unpredictable' flu virus](#)"
- Sept. 24, 2019, West Dakota FOX: "[Flu vaccine kick-off](#)"
- Sept. 26, 2019, Health.mil: "[Autumn ushers in season of falling under the weather with flu](#)"
- Sept. 27, 2019, MediaPlanet Toronto: "[Remembering Amiah with Flu Prevention](#)"
- Sept. 27, 2019, MediaPlanet Toronto: "[What Families Fighting Flu Wants You To Know](#)"
- Oct. 27, 2019, Healthline: "[Meet the Teen Fighting Back Against Anti-Vaccine Propaganda](#)"
- Nov. 1, 2019, CNN: "[She was called the n-word and given instructions to slit her wrists. What did Facebook do?](#)"

#### **Broadcast:**

- Sept. 24, 2019, KX News: "[Annual flu shot may help save your life](#)"

---

### **Make a Tax-Deductible Donation**

**Families Fighting Flu operates solely on donations from individuals and organizations who support our mission and share our goals.**

[DONATE NOW](#)

### **Connect with Us!**

