Message from our Chief Operating Officer

What a crazy flu season it has been thus far! We’ve been experiencing a wave of influenza B and now that’s being followed by a wave of influenza A. Between flu and coronavirus, public health is a top concern for many people right now.

At this point in the season, flu-related pediatric deaths are at an all-time high since 2004, with the exception of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, and data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate approximately 80% of these children were not vaccinated. The flu-related hospitalization rate in children age 0 - 4 years is now the highest on record, even surpassing the 2009 pandemic. Simply put, we need to do better.

Some good news - the CDC has reported that the preliminary vaccine effectiveness (VE) numbers for 2019-2020 illustrate the benefits of vaccination, with a VE of 45% across all age groups and flu strains. Even better, the VE for children age 6 months to 17 years is 55%!

But we know flu vaccines don’t do any good if they’re left sitting on a shelf. Vaccine hesitancy continues to be an ongoing issue that we are all trying to combat through education and advocacy efforts.

We’ve been hard at work here at the organization and we hope you take a few minutes to review some of our ongoing efforts and accomplishments below. Thank you to all of the hardworking individuals who continue to promote flu awareness, prevention, and treatment. We cannot do it alone! As always, please feel free to reach out to us as we welcome your involvement, feedback, and support!

Sincerely,

Check out our new blog - Insights on Influenza!
We're excited to announce the launch of our blog, Insights on Influenza! Our evidence-based articles on flu-related topics will help you learn everything you need to know about how to stay healthy this flu season and beyond. Read our posts here.

Satellite Media Tour

**Dr. Flor Munoz**, FFF Medical Advisor, and **Tash Haynes**, FFF advocate and flu survivor, recently participated in a Satellite Media Tour. Dr. Munoz spoke about the importance of annual flu vaccination and Tash shared how her flu illness complications still affect her today. Their messages reached over **9.8 million** viewers and listeners on over 20 broadcast and radio news segments. Click here to view one of the many news channels they were featured on!
Flu Champion profile: Samy Awwad

Samy Awwad, a high school senior, has made an impact in his CA community by educating others on the seriousness of flu and importance of immunizations. Samy’s drive to increase vaccination rates and expand public health education led him to founding a nonprofit organization, ImmuniGlobal, at age 15.

Samy works with FFF to help support him with resources to elevate education and awareness. This past flu season, Samy, with support from his local partners and FFF, has conducted multiple classroom workshops with high school students aimed at getting them to understand how they not only protect themselves but their community when receiving the flu vaccination. Samy aims to become a physician one day, and he’s already taking initiatives to keep people healthy.

Do you want to become a Flu Champion? Order a toolkit of educational materials here and let us know how we can help support you! To date, FFF has distributed over 95 toolkits and over 40,000 pieces of educational materials this flu season.

FFF Policy Support

Our advocates are busy helping to support public health efforts where it counts!

Angie Wehrkamp, who lost her two-year-old daughter Gianna to flu, recently traveled to Pierre, South Dakota to testify at a hearing and share her story in an effort to educate legislators and advocate for maintaining school-mandated immunization policies.

Serese Marotta, who lost her five-year-old son Joseph to flu, recently wrote an op-ed and letter of support for pharmacists to test and treat for influenza in the State of Florida.

New billboard in Nassau County

We're proud to showcase our first-ever static billboard located in Nassau County, New York. We hope to use this form of mass communication to help raise awareness about the severity of flu and the importance of annual flu vaccination.
National Vaccine Advisory Committee: Feb. 14, 2020 meeting

Established in 1987, the National Vaccine Advisory Committee (NVAC) recommends ways to achieve optimal prevention of human infectious diseases through vaccine development, and provides direction to prevent adverse reactions to vaccines. This advice is presented to the Assistant Secretary for Health who serves as the Director of National Vaccine Program on matters related to program responsibilities.

Serese Marotta, FFF’s COO, presented at the NVAC meeting to share best practices for successful sharing of stories. In the panel, Serese was joined by Dr. David Robert Grimes from Oxford University, Tamika Felder from Cervivor, and Zahra Barnes from SELF Magazine. The title of Serese’s presentation was "Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy with Storytelling".

Spotlight on Family Stories

We’ve added three new stories to our gallery on the FFF website:

- **JJ Neiman-Brown**, a two-year-old who just recently lost his life to flu on Feb. 2, 2020;
- **Paul Rasmussen**, a 57-year-old man who lost his life to flu in April 2016; and
- **Jewel Rogers**, a 41-year-old woman who was hospitalized for three months with flu in 2016.

Read and share their stories to help raise awareness about the dangers of flu and the importance of annual flu vaccination!
Join our new Facebook group!

Are you a Flu Fighter? If so, we welcome you to join our new Facebook group, Flu Fighting Forum. We plan to use this group to keep folks updated on flu and share ways to get involved in flu advocacy, prevention, and education. Content will include:

- Shareable social media content
- Policy issues and sign-on petitions
- CDC flu burden updates
- News articles and research
- Discussions about best practices for discussing flu and flu vaccination
- Advocacy tools and resources

Join our group here!

2019-2020 Flu Season Update

January and February is often when we see the peak of flu activity. According to CDC reports to date, this flu season has resulted in the following:

- Flu has caused at least 32 million illnesses
- Flu has caused at least 14 million medical visits
- Flu has caused at least 310,000 hospitalizations
- Flu has caused at least 18,000 deaths, including 125 children

Make a Tax-Deductible Donation

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

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