

# Families Fighting Flu Marks 20th Anniversary During National Influenza Awareness Week

*Families impacted by flu available to discuss personal stories, what FFF has accomplished in first 20 years*

ARLINGTON, VA, UNITED STATES, November 30, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ahead of National Influenza Awareness Week (December 2-6 th ), Families Fighting Flu (FFF) members are reflecting on the organization's accomplishments and the work that must continue to promote protection from the influenza virus.

This is especially important as the 2024-2025 flu and respiratory illness season gets underway.

The Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) is reporting a slight increase in flu activity, including an increase among children. Additionally, another pediatric death was recently reported from the 2023-24 flu season, bringing the total number of deaths to 205. That is the highest number since the 2019-2020 flu season. Two pediatric deaths have been reported already this year.

"It's worrisome to be heading into another respiratory season with an early uptick in pediatric illnesses," said Michele Slafkosky, Executive Director of FFF. "Last season's pediatric deaths are among the highest in recent years. Our organization's mission is to prevent another family from suffering the same loss that our families have."

In 2004, a small group of parents who had lost a child to the flu came together, united in their grief, but determined to change policies that did not include flu vaccinations for young children, with a focus on keeping other families from experiencing similar tragic losses unnecessarily.

Over the following years, Families Fighting Flu was instrumental in helping to lower the age requirement for those who receive an annual flu shot. That work culminated in the 2010 ACIP recommendation for the universal flu vaccine recommendation for Americans aged 6 months and older. That recommendation remains in place to this day.

Despite this strong vaccine recommendation, raising the rates of flu vaccine administration remains a challenge. During the 2023-24 flu season, vaccinations for children aged 6 months through 17-years-old were just over 55%--a decrease of two percentage points from the previous season and down by more than 8 percent pre-pandemic.

“Vaccination is the best way to help prevent illness, and most importantly, can reduce the severity of disease if a vaccinated individual does contract the flu,” said Slafkosky. Family members and survivors from across the U.S. are available for interviews—for example:

Florida:

Kaitlyn Covert: Cousin of Amanda Kantowitz, who died of the flu. Kaitlyn contracted the flu in October 2024 and was hospitalized twice. A freshman at the University of Florida, she is an active member of the FFF Junior Board.

(Gainesville)

Madi Allen was an active 12-year-old when she contracted the flu. She spent more than 90 days in the hospital and was given a 1 percent chance of survival. She now lives in Florida and is working in a pulmonologist’s office, starting to administer the flu shot to her patients. (Tampa)

Missouri:

Charlie Hinderlichter, a flu survivor from St. Louis, caught the flu when he was 38. He ended up in the hospital for nearly two months and had months of recovery following that at the same nursing home as his grandmother.

New York:

Alissa Kantowitz, a founding family member of FFF who lost her 4-year-old daughter, Amanda, to the flu in 2004. (Scarsdale)

Texas:

Megan and Jesse Parks, who lost their daughter, Kennedy, to the flu in 2023. Megan was rushing her daughter to the hospital when she stopped breathing. (Houston)

Joe and Jennifer [Lastinger](#), founding family members of FFF who lost their 3-year-old daughter, [Emily](#), to the flu in 2004. (Dallas)

Michigan:

Michele and Kaden Stevenson

Now 9 years old, Kaden survived the flu, but both of his legs had to be amputated as a result of the infection in his bloodstream that the flu caused. (Flint)

Virginia/DC Metro:

Doris, Gary, and Eric Stein, founding family of FFF, lost their daughter and sister, Jessica, when she was 4 years old to complications from the flu. Her then 2-year-old brother, Eric, now works for FFF. He is also a flu survivor. (Falls Church)

Other families with similar stories are available for interviews in the following states:

CT, IA, IL, KY, NJ, NM, NY, OR, PA, SD, VA

Please inquire with Jen Daly for more information.

#### About Families Fighting Flu:

Founded in 2004, Families Fighting Flu (FFF) is a national, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) advocacy organization dedicated to protecting children, families, and communities against the flu. Our organization includes families whose loved ones have suffered serious medical complications or died from influenza, as well as other advocates and healthcare professionals committed to flu education and prevention.

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