

Screening for Kidney Disease

It all began with a simple trip to the grocery store by Brenda Russell, a member of a local church in Yoncalla, Oregon. The “March is Kidney Month” ad on grocery bags that NKF received from Fred Meyer, Safeway, and Ray’s Food Place grocery stores in Oregon and Washington caught her eye. The church had already planned a health fair for July, so Brenda contacted NKF about adding a kidney health screening to their event.

NKF staff member and transplant recipient Laura Ellsworth visited Brenda and other women who were planning the health event. Laura shared her story and relayed to them the importance of detecting kidney disease early. She trained them on how to perform the NKF health screening – everything from testing a person’s blood sugar level to showing them how to read the urine test strips that check for elevated protein levels.

Using NKF materials, the Yoncalla women screened 152 people. Of those, 68 showed signs of potential decreased kidney function, which is a staggering 45% of those tested. Based on their blood pressure and glucose readings, those with elevated numbers were advised to speak with their physicians. From this event, Tillamook County Hospital asked to have an NKF health screening held at their county fair in August

Health screenings are one way the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) helps educate the public about kidney disease. The warning signs include high blood pressure, protein in the urine, and high glucose levels related to diabetes. NKF offers several screenings throughout the year at health fairs, churches, community centers, and even for company health events like ones arranged for the employees of Spirit Mountain Casino and Fullerton & Co. in Oregon and Boeing in Auburn, Washington.

NKF plans to organize more health screenings onsite at companies like Fullerton Insurance in Portland, who hosted NKF’s first corporate health screening in March. Boeing’s Auburn, Washington plant also hosted a health screening in June, which screened 104 people. Boeing has since asked NKF to conduct additional screenings at their other locations.

For more information on working with NKF to sponsor a health screening, contact the NKF office for your area.

---Shannon L. Cheesman