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MNITE

MAGAZINE

MENDEZ NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TRANSPLANTATION FOUNDATION

HANK NORTHROP

Inside his journey from *Days of Our Lives* to *Boatlift 9/11*—and why stories of hope, courage, and compassion matter more than ever.

Inside: Celebrity voices, medical insight, and real stories of second chances



A LETTER FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As we close out 2026, we want to take a moment to thank you for being part of the MNITF family this year. We're excited to continue the MNITF Magazine into 2027, bringing you tips on healthy living, kidney disease prevention, and the latest in transplantation and organ donation.

This Fall issue is one we're especially proud of, filled with inspiring stories and expert insights we think you'll love. Twenty-five years ago on September 11th, our nation experienced the largest terrorist attack. ***Boatlift 9/11***, a powerful short film co-produced with Suzanne DeLaurentiis Productions honoring the maritime heroes of 9/11, premiered this past September 11th. Sadly, the devastating impact of debris exposure has left so many first responders battling kidney disease, cancer, and other serious illnesses.

Also in this issue, we sit down with celebrity Hank Northrop — from *Days of Our Lives* to *Boatlift 9/11* to MNITF's most recent Public Service Announcement about kidney disease prevention — to discuss the power of storytelling in his performances. We also hear personal, moving stories from Fat Sal's Vice President of Operations about his kidney cancer journey (Fat Sal's has generously catered MNITF events, and we're grateful for their continued support), and from Taj Ahmad Eldridge about life on dialysis and his path to kidney transplant. All this and much more awaits you inside — we hope you'll take some time to read through it and share it with those you love.

None of this storytelling would be possible without your support. We hope you'll consider a gift to MNITF so we can keep using the power of entertainment and personal stories to educate people everywhere about kidney disease, transplantation, and living donation. Every contribution helps us reach more families and save more lives.

Please share this magazine with your family and friends, and join us on social media – Instagram: MNITF_ORG, Facebook: MNITF, and TikTok: MNITF_. Together, we can build kidney disease awareness, advance transplantation, and empower patients. Have a wonderful and healthy fall and winter!

Warm regards,
Nicole Mendez

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BOATLIFT 9/11

A STORY OF COURAGE, COMPASSION, AND HOPE

One of the year's most anticipated independent films, *Boatlift 9/11* has been generating excitement and fittingly premiered on September 11.

Inspired by the remarkable true story of the largest maritime evacuation in American history, the film recounts the extraordinary efforts of everyday civilians who came together to rescue more than 500,000 people from Lower Manhattan in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks.

Following the completion of filming, the production held a week of special public screenings in Hollywood this June, giving audiences an early look at the powerful film before its red-carpet premiere on September 11, commemorating the 25th anniversary.

The film has also been generating significant media attention thanks to its accomplished cast, led by internationally acclaimed actress **Sofia Helin** (*The Bridge*) and **Hank Northrop** (*Days of Our Lives*). *The film's Oscar-qualifying application has been accepted, officially making it eligible for Academy Award consideration.*

Northrop, who is featured on the cover of this issue of MNITF Magazine, brings heart and authenticity to a story centered on courage, compassion, and the resilience of the human spirit.

Beyond honoring one of history's greatest civilian rescue efforts, *Boatlift 9/11* also shines a light on the long-term health consequences many 9/11 survivors continue to face—including respiratory illnesses, cancer, and kidney disease—making the film a meaningful partnership for MNITF as it continues its mission of education, awareness, and hope.

On the Set

Behind the scenes of
Boatlift 9/11

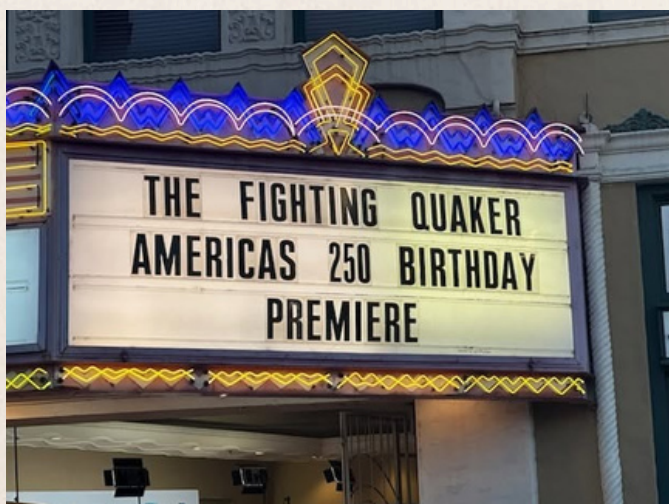


Boatlift 9/11 stars, Preslea Elliott and Hank Northrop, with producer Suzanne DeLaurentiis at the Hollywood screening of the film in June 2026.



Stay up to date on all MNITF projects at [MNITF.org](https://mnitf.org)

***The Fighting Quaker* Raised Funds for Mendez National Institute of Transplantation Foundation in Successful Benefit Evening at El Portal Theater**



One-Night Theatrical Event Celebrating America's 250th Anniversary Draws Enthusiastic Crowd to North Hollywood

Producers Suzanne Matlack DeLaurentiis, Dale Fabrigar, and Nicole Mendez celebrated a triumphant one-night run of *The Fighting Quaker* on Thursday, June 4, 2026 at the El Portal Theater in North Hollywood, CA. The theatrical benefit — staged in honor of America's 250th anniversary — drew an enthusiastic full-house audience and raised funds for the Mendez National Institute of Transplantation Foundation (MNITF), which advances research, education, and awareness around kidney disease and organ donation.

Guests arrived to a festive lobby reception beginning at 6:00 p.m., where a generous spread from Fat Sal's — including options for every dietary need — and a trio of beverage stations set a celebratory tone before the performance. In addition, Sea Bright Wines provided a wine tasting experience.

Written by the late Ann Matlack DeLaurentiis and Tricia Aurand and directed by Bryan Rasmussen, the drama brought to life the largely forgotten story of Timothy Matlack, the man who hand-inscribed the official copy of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 on the recommendation of Benjamin Franklin. The production featured a striking digital backdrop that, according to attendees, added considerable visual clarity to the historical narrative.

"I hope we can inspire audiences not only to reflect on our nation's history but also reconnect with this simple, powerful act of writing," said producer Suzanne Matlack DeLaurentiis, herself a descendant of Timothy Matlack and the daughter of the play's original playwright, who first staged the drama in 1968. The production's message resonated strongly with the crowd, drawing attention to both Matlack's remarkable journey — from debtor's prison to the halls of the Second Continental Congress — and the enduring significance of the handwritten word.

Following the performance, guests returned to the lobby for themed cake and cookies before VIP attendees gathered in one of El Portal's smaller theaters to receive gift bags that included pashminas, neckties, and curated product samples. The evening concluded with cast members greeting guests outside the theater for photos and conversation — a warm finale to what proved to be a memorable multi-part event.

All proceeds benefited the Mendez National Institute of Transplantation Foundation. For more information on the organization and its mission, visit www.mnityf.org.



The cast of *The Fighting Quaker* with MNITF's Nicole Mendez backstage at the El Portal Theater.

Go Behind the Scenes of MNITF's New Kidney Disease Awareness Public Service Announcement Campaign with Antonio Sabato, Jr., Hank Northrop, and Ana Canseco

WATCH THE FULL PSA VIDEOS ON OUR WEBSITE AT MNITF.ORG/PSAS



Model and actor **Antonio Sabato Jr.**



Days Of Our Lives star **Hank Northrop** with director Dale Fabrigar



Telenovela actress and Univision talk show host **Ana María Canseco**

HANK NORTHROP

THE ACTOR DISCUSSES *BOATLIFT 9/11*, FOLLOWING IN HIS FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS, AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BRINGING TRUE STORIES TO LIFE.

Whether portraying beloved characters on television or bringing powerful true stories to life on the big screen, actor **Hank Northrop** believes storytelling has the power to inspire, heal, and unite.

Best known to many fans for his work on *Days of Our Lives*, Northrop now stars in *Boatlift 9/11*, a moving film that tells the remarkable true story of the largest maritime evacuation in history following the September 11 attacks.

As a partner on the film, MNITF is honored to share this conversation with Hank about his acting journey, the responsibility of telling real-life stories, and why compassion and human connection remain at the heart of every meaningful performance.



Photo Courtesy of Corday Productions/*Days of our Lives*

What first inspired you to pursue acting, and what has been the most rewarding part of your journey in the industry so far?

I've wanted to be an actor for as long as I can remember. Both of my parents are actors, and they've always been my heroes.

Growing up, I saw firsthand the impact they could have on people through storytelling. Whether it was making someone laugh, helping them feel seen, or inspiring them during a difficult time, I realized acting was about much more than entertainment.

The most rewarding part of my journey has been connecting with audiences and being part of stories that resonate with people in meaningful ways.

You've appeared in a variety of projects throughout your career. How do you decide which roles resonate with you personally and professionally?

For me, it always starts with the character and the story. I'm drawn to roles that feel authentic and human—characters who are flawed, complex, and have something meaningful to say.

Professionally, I look for projects that challenge me and allow me to grow as an actor. Personally, I want to be part of stories that leave an impact, whether they're entertaining, inspiring, or encouraging people to see the world from a different perspective.

Let's talk about your role on *Days of Our Lives*. What has that role meant to you, and how has the soap opera community shaped you as an actor and as a person?

Being part of *Days of Our Lives* has been an absolute dream come true! My dad was the original Roman Brady on the show, so being able to follow in his footsteps has meant the world to me.

Soap operas move at a unique pace, and they demand a tremendous amount of preparation, focus, and adaptability. I've learned so much as an actor from that environment. Beyond the work itself, the soap opera community is unlike any other. The fans are incredibly loyal and passionate, and the people who create these shows genuinely care about the stories they're telling.

It's taught me the value of consistency, professionalism, and building lasting connections with an audience. I'm just doing my best to make my dad proud!

What drew you to become involved with the film *Boatlift 9/11*, and what made this story particularly meaningful to tell?

What attracted me to *Boatlift 9/11* was the extraordinary humanity at the center of the story. In the midst of a national tragedy, ordinary people stepped up to help complete strangers.

It's a reminder that even in our darkest moments, compassion and selflessness can bring people together. Those are the kinds of stories I love being a part of because they highlight the very best qualities of the human spirit.

How did portraying such emotionally charged events impact you as an actor?

It wasn't easy. Working on a story like this forces you to approach the material with a great deal of respect and empathy. As actors, we're tasked with honoring real experiences and real emotions.

It challenged me to listen more deeply, understand the human side of these events, and focus on truth rather than performance. It was a powerful reminder

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As an actor, I hope to continue being part of work that not only entertains but also inspires conversation, encourages understanding, and helps people see themselves, and each other, in a more meaningful way.

- Hank Northrop

that acting can be a way of preserving important stories and helping audiences connect with them on an emotional level.

Organizations like MNITF work to raise awareness about kidney disease and the importance of organ donation. Why do you think storytelling and the arts can be effective tools for increasing awareness about health-related issues?

Facts and statistics are important, but stories help people connect emotionally. When audiences see someone's journey, struggles, and triumphs, those issues become personal rather than abstract. Storytelling creates empathy, and empathy often inspires action. Stories can open hearts in a way that information alone sometimes cannot.

What message would you want audiences to take away about the power of human connection during difficult times?

I would want people to know that no one has to face those challenges alone. One of the most powerful things we can do for each other is simply show up—with compassion, support, and understanding. Human connection can provide strength when people need it most. Even in the most difficult circumstances, hope often comes from the relationships we build and the willingness of others to help carry us through.

From Fear to Hope:

A KIDNEY CANCER SURVIVOR'S JOURNEY

Many people know Fat Sal's, the popular restaurant chain famous for its over-the-top sandwiches. Joshua Cook serves as the company's Vice President of Operations, a role he has held since 2016. What many don't know is that behind his successful career is a life-changing battle with stage IV kidney cancer—a journey that has transformed his outlook on family, health, and the future.

In this exclusive interview with MNITF Magazine, he shares how an unexpected hip injury led to a shocking diagnosis, the support system that carried him through treatment, and why kidney health awareness matters more than ever.

Can you share when you first learned something was wrong and what that experience was like?

I was actually very fortunate that my cancer was discovered because kidney cancer often has very few noticeable warning signs. For about two to three months, I was dealing with severe pain in my left hip. I was limping badly and finally decided to see an orthopedic specialist that a friend recommended, Dr. Eric Millstein.

He took X-rays and diagnosed me with a minor hip impingement—a small bone issue in the hip socket. To be extra cautious, he ordered an MRI. That's when they found four tumors on my iliac crest. One of them was quite large and was pressing against my hip muscle, which was causing all of the pain.

Finding out you have tumors is indescribable. I remember lying on the MRI table already convinced I had cancer and was going to die. Two days later, I was sitting in an oncologist's office being told that although a biopsy was still needed, it was almost certainly stage IV cancer of some kind.



Photos Courtesy of Joshua Cook

The next three weeks were easily the worst of my life. I knew I had stage IV cancer, and I couldn't stop Googling—which is probably the worst thing you can do. Everything I read convinced me that I wasn't going to survive.

Looking back, were there any symptoms or warning signs that you now wish you had paid more attention to?

Honestly, there weren't any. I had recently completed a full physical with blood work, and everything came back normal. If it hadn't been for the hip pain and the MRI my orthopedic doctor ordered, I never would have known anything was wrong.

How has your kidney cancer journey influenced the way you approach life, business, and your relationships?

It showed me that I'm much stronger than I ever thought I was. More importantly, it taught me to truly appreciate every moment with my friends and family—especially my daughter, who was just two years old when I was diagnosed and is now five. Going through something like this has a way of stripping everything down to what really matters.

How did you balance your responsibilities at Fat Sal's with treatment and recovery?

I was incredibly fortunate. The owners of Fat Sal's supported me completely and gave me whatever time or flexibility I needed throughout treatment. I enrolled in a clinical trial at City of Hope. While I do experience some difficult physical side effects from the medication I take, they've never prevented me from doing my job. Having that level of support made all the difference.

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced during your health journey, and what kept you motivated?

The mental aspect was by far the hardest. I started therapy the week before treatment began, and it was one of the best decisions I made. Even though my doctor believed I was going to be okay, it was difficult to truly believe it until I saw real results. I remember lying in bed with my wife when my phone rang around 10 p.m. after my first progress scans. My doctor told me the tumors had shrunk by about 30 percent and that the treatment was working as well as they had hoped. I cried for almost an hour. Knowing the treatment was working—and realizing I really was going to be okay—was overwhelming. But my greatest motivation has always been my wife, my daughter, my family, and my friends.

What message would you like readers to know about kidney awareness and early detection?

I certainly never thought much about kidney health before all of this happened. My biggest piece of advice is to get your yearly physical and don't be afraid to ask questions about your results. You have to be your own best advocate. Early detection can make all the difference.

Were there any people or support systems who made a significant difference during your cancer journey?

Without question, my wife was my biggest source of strength. I honestly don't know how I would have gotten through this without her. She is my rock and the greatest partner I could ever ask for. My parents and my brother have always been there for me, no matter what. The owners of Fat Sal's, Josh Stone and Sal Capek, have been unbelievably supportive—they're family to me. My friends in Los Angeles have also shown incredible kindness.

MNITF works to educate and inspire people affected by kidney disease. What does it mean to you to support organizations that focus on kidney health awareness?

It means everything to me. I was incredibly fortunate to receive outstanding medical care, especially from my doctor, Dr. Sumanta Pal. Not everyone has access to the same opportunities or treatment that I did. If I can help raise awareness or support others facing kidney disease or kidney cancer, it's truly an honor and a privilege.

Looking toward the future, what are you most excited about?

More than anything, I'm excited to simply live a normal life and watch my daughter grow up. When I was first diagnosed, I genuinely didn't think that would be possible. Today, I know I'm going to live a long, full life, and I'm determined to appreciate every single minute of it.



THE GIFT THAT SAVED A LIFE:

TAJ AHMAD ELDRIDGE'S KIDNEY TRANSPLANT JOURNEY

By the time entrepreneur and investor Taj Ahmad Eldridge learned he had Stage 5 end-stage renal disease (ESRD), the warning signs had been there for years.

Looking back, he describes his journey as one "focused on missteps, advocacy, and a chance meeting."

The first clue came in 2008 when he applied for Key Man insurance for his business. His application was denied after the insurance company discovered elevated protein levels in his urine and advised him to follow up with his primary care physician.

He did exactly that.

"I was referred to a nephrologist at Kaiser, who ran some tests but never mentioned any type of ailment and merely indicated that I'd be monitored," Eldridge recalls. "I was unaware of the impact of high protein in the urine because I thought I felt good, so there was nothing to worry about at age 33."

Nearly ten years later, fate intervened.

In February 2018, Eldridge happened to meet nephrologist Dr. Shuchi Vyas, who urged him to undergo a kidney biopsy after learning about the earlier protein findings and his increasing fatigue.

"She stressed the importance of getting the biopsy even though I told her I was already being seen by a nephrologist at the same facility," he says.



Kidney donor Emilee McGowan and recipient Taj Ahmad Eldridge.

By the time the biopsy was completed in March 2018, he had reached Stage 5 ESRD.

Life on Dialysis

Just one month later, Eldridge began dialysis while simultaneously starting a new job.

"I had to immediately go on dialysis in April 2018, and I also started a new job at the same time," he says. "Navigating those professional changes while on dialysis was extremely burdensome."

Three days each week, he attended dialysis from 4:30 a.m. until 9:00 a.m. before driving from Riverside County to downtown Los Angeles for work.



His treatments evolved from peritoneal dialysis at home to 24-hour dialysis at DaVita before settling into a traditional four-hour, three-times-a-week schedule.

"Through it all, I felt alone and isolated because I didn't have the benefit of visitors sitting with me in the early days or throughout my process."

Working in venture capital while undergoing dialysis presented challenges far beyond the physical demands of treatment. "It was rough and challenging, especially working in the venture capital industry while on dialysis."

Eventually, Eldridge found purpose in sharing his experience publicly. "I became very vocal about my experience, not just to raise awareness for a potential donor, but also as a form of therapy to cope with how dramatically my life had changed with my diet, energy, and the fact that dialysis felt similar to prison because I had no freedom during a certain part of my life."

His diagnosis also became intertwined with a deeply personal family tragedy. Three of his cousins, who had lived in the same area, also experienced kidney disease.

"All of my cousins passed away," he says, "including one, Keisha Eldridge, who decided to discontinue dialysis treatment during COVID."

The Kidney Phone

As he searched for a donor, support came from many directions. As a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Eldridge says his fraternity brothers became "my first line of potential donors." One of them, Robert McGowan Jr., hoped to donate but was

ultimately unable to do so because of health reasons. Instead, Robert's wife, Emilee McGowan, volunteered. "Emilee had multiple doctor visits for testing that caused a lot of uncertainty for both of us," Eldridge says.

At the same time, another opportunity emerged when his friend Julius Mwale offered to facilitate a transplant at a new hospital in western Kenya.

"I was very grateful for these opportunities that came very quickly, as all of this happened only a few years after starting dialysis."

Then came the phone call he had been waiting for. "I got a call on my 'kidney phone,'" he says. Eldridge kept two cell phones—one for daily life and one dedicated to the day a donor would be found. "I was at an investment conference called SoCAP in San Francisco when I got the news that Emilee was approved. The hallway filled with my colleagues became a cacophony of cheers."

Although Emilee was not a direct match, Loma Linda Hospital arranged what is known as a paired kidney exchange, or "daisy chain." Emilee donated to someone she matched. That recipient's donor helped another patient. Eldridge received the third donor's kidney. "So, six surgeries occurred because of Emilee's generosity."

The transplant took place on January 12, 2023—a date that carried unexpected meaning. Robert and Emilee's son, Myles McGowan, and Eldridge's daughter, Ava Eldridge, were both born on January 12, 2003. While Myles passed away from cancer in 2008, Eldridge says, "I believe his legacy lived on not only through his foundation, the Myles Ahead of Cancer Foundation, but also through the bond Emilee and I share because of the date of the surgery."

(continued on the next page)



A New Life

Three years after his transplant, Eldridge's life looks dramatically different. He now lives in Kenya and speaks internationally about environmental factors and kidney disease.

"I have spoken at events across the globe, including in China, Austria, the United Arab Emirates, France, Mexico, and more."

Those opportunities have taken on new meaning. "Before my transplant, I would travel while on dialysis, literally be on a plane for a day, and then return to California the next day for treatment." He is equally proud of what he accomplished while still receiving dialysis. "What has meant the most to me are the people I've inspired to continue building despite health challenges."

During that time, he co-founded Include Ventures, a multimillion-dollar venture fund—from the dialysis chair.

Hope for Others

Today, Eldridge's advice for others facing kidney disease is simple.

"Find a community. I didn't, and I wish I had because it helps with education, awareness, and self-advocacy." He also encourages patients to stay active. "I started my venture fund to take my mind off the prison-like feeling I had. It felt great."

His final message is one of perseverance.

"Don't give up. I wish my cousin, who did, could have heard that message."

Having experienced kidney disease firsthand, Eldridge now views organ donation differently than ever before.

"While I have long been an organ donor through my driver's license, I never really thought much about it," he says. "Now, as someone who has experienced kidney disease firsthand, I would say it is one of the most valuable and selfless actions a person can take."

He also hopes more people will learn about kidney disease before it affects them personally.

"I would encourage everyone to learn more, even if kidney disease hasn't impacted you or your loved ones."

Looking toward the future, Eldridge remains optimistic—not only for himself but for kidney patients everywhere.

"I'm most grateful for Emilee, who literally saved my life," he says. "I'm grateful for my nephrologist, Dr. Vyas, who was the catalyst, and for Loma Linda Hospital as the healthcare system that became the conduit for Emilee's highest act of kindness that benefited me."

As someone working in technology, he hopes innovations such as 3D-printed kidneys, greater access to healthy foods, reduced environmental factors, and other medical advances will help reduce kidney disease in the years ahead.

And he closes with gratitude for those who continue to tell these stories.

"I'm grateful for publications like this that help tell the stories of the true heroes for kidney patients—our donors and our doctors."

**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ORGAN
DONATION AT MNITF.ORG**

The Future of Kidney Medicine:

Could Damaged Kidneys One Day Heal Themselves?



For decades, the treatment options for advanced kidney disease have remained largely the same: medications to slow progression, dialysis to replace some kidney function, and transplantation for eligible patients. While these treatments have saved countless lives, they don't repair damaged kidneys. But what if one day they could?

Researchers around the world are exploring an exciting field known as kidney regeneration—the science of helping damaged kidneys repair themselves or replacing damaged tissue using regenerative medicine. Although these therapies are still being studied and are not yet standard treatments, recent discoveries are bringing scientists closer than ever to making kidney repair a reality.

Understanding the Kidney's "Building Blocks"

Each kidney contains about one million tiny filtering units called nephrons. These microscopic structures remove waste products, balance fluids and electrolytes, regulate blood pressure, and help produce hormones essential for healthy red blood cells and bones.

The challenge is that once a significant number of nephrons are permanently damaged—whether from diabetes, high blood pressure, genetic disorders, or other causes—they generally do not regenerate on their own. Instead, the kidneys gradually lose function over time.

That's why researchers are asking one important question: *Can we help kidneys repair themselves before too much damage occurs?*

Stem Cells: Helping the Kidney Heal

One of the most promising areas of research involves stem cells. Stem cells are unique because they have the ability to develop into specialized cells and release substances that help reduce inflammation and promote healing. Scientists are particularly interested in mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs), which appear to support damaged kidneys by reducing inflammation, limiting scar tissue (fibrosis), and encouraging the body's own repair mechanisms.

Current clinical trials are investigating whether stem cell therapies can slow the progression of chronic kidney disease or help patients recover from acute kidney injury.

Can Damaged Nephrons Be Repaired?

Scientists once believed that adult kidneys had very little ability to repair themselves. Today, that thinking has evolved.

Researchers have discovered that certain kidney cells can repair injured portions of existing nephrons after acute damage.

Scientists are now studying how developmental genes—genes that help build kidneys before birth—might be temporarily reactivated to enhance this natural repair process.

The goal isn't necessarily to grow entirely new kidneys overnight. Instead, researchers hope to preserve healthy tissue, restore function to injured cells, and slow or even prevent further kidney damage. Although this research is still in its early stages, it represents a major shift in how scientists think about kidney disease.

Gene Therapy: Correcting Problems at Their Source

Another promising area is gene therapy. Some kidney diseases, including certain inherited conditions, result from genetic mutations. Gene therapy aims to correct or replace faulty genes that contribute to disease.

Researchers are exploring whether advanced gene-editing technologies may eventually help treat inherited kidney disorders before irreversible damage occurs.

While much of this work remains in laboratory and early-stage research, advances in precision medicine continue to expand the possibilities.

For patients with genetic kidney diseases, these discoveries offer hope that future treatments may address the underlying cause of disease—not just its symptoms.

A Future Beyond Dialysis?

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of regenerative medicine is its long-term vision.

Scientists are also developing kidney organoids—tiny, lab-grown kidney tissues created from stem cells. Although these miniature structures are far too small to replace an entire kidney, they allow researchers to study disease, test medications, and better understand how kidneys develop and repair themselves.

Combined with advances in tissue engineering, bioengineering, and regenerative medicine, these discoveries may one day help reduce the need for dialysis and even decrease the demand for kidney transplants. That future is still years away, but the pace of research continues to accelerate.

A Message of Hope

It's important to remember that regenerative kidney therapies are not yet available as standard medical treatments. Patients should continue following their healthcare team's recommendations regarding medications, dialysis, transplantation, and lifestyle changes.

Still, the progress being made offers a genuine reason for optimism. Only a generation ago, repairing damaged kidneys seemed impossible. Today, researchers are uncovering new ways to stimulate healing, protect nephrons, explore stem cell therapies, and investigate gene-based treatments that could transform kidney care in the future.

Every breakthrough begins with research, and every discovery brings us one step closer to a future where treating kidney disease may mean restoring kidney function—not simply replacing it.

For the millions of people living with kidney disease around the world, that's a future worth hoping for.

SOURCES

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- *Stem Cells and Kidney Regeneration: Transforming Renal Medicine* (2025). *Frontiers in Bioengineering and Biotechnology*.
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COOKING CORNER

Pumpkin Bread

(Kidney-Conscious & Dairy-Free)



A cozy fall treat that's lower in sodium and kidney-conscious.

This CKD-Friendly Pumpkin Bread brings together warm spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves for a festive dessert the whole family will enjoy!

- ✓ Reduced added sugar compared to many traditional pumpkin bread recipes
- ✓ Lower sodium
- ✓ Moderate potassium with portion control
- ✓ No butter or cream cheese
- ✓ Lower phosphorus than recipes made with nuts or chocolate



Sandy Lo is a food blogger, writer, creative entrepreneur, and the founder of The Merry Bake Shop, where she creates nostalgic, plant-based desserts inspired by comfort and celebration. Her work focuses on approachable recipes that balance indulgence with mindful ingredient choices. Through MNITF Magazine's cooking column, Sandy is proud to share kidney-conscious recipes designed to bring joy to the table while supporting overall wellness and the foundation's mission of education and hope.

Kidney-Friendly Pumpkin Bread

INGREDIENTS:

- 1½ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup cake flour (helps keep it light without extra phosphorus from whole grains)
- 1½ tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp baking soda
- 1½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- ⅛ tsp ground cloves (optional)
- ¼ tsp salt (optional—omit if on a strict sodium restriction)
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- ⅓ cup light brown sugar
- ½ cup canned pumpkin purée (not pumpkin pie filling)
- ⅓ cup canola oil
- 1 large egg
- 1½ tsp vanilla extract
- ⅓ cup water

Optional Add-Ins

(Use only if appropriate for your diet.)

- ¼ cup unsweetened dried cranberries
- A sprinkle of cinnamon before baking

Avoid nuts and chocolate chips if you need to limit phosphorus and potassium.



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Lightly grease an 8x4-inch loaf pan or line it with parchment paper.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the flours, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, and salt.
4. In another bowl, whisk together the sugars, pumpkin, oil, eggs, vanilla, and water until smooth.
5. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and stir just until combined. Do not overmix.
6. Fold in dried cranberries, if using.
7. Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan.
8. Bake for 50–60 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
9. Cool in the pan for 10 minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

DISCLAIMER: If you have kidney disease, diabetes, hypertension, or other medical condition(s), consult your doctor about foods to avoid and adjust recipes as needed.

Thank you to all who participated in our cooking challenge!

In our summer issue, we asked our readers to participate in our recipe challenge and make our Berry Crumble! We received tons of submissions of yummy Berry Crumble photos – we picked the Top 3 and here they are!



Kaitlyn T., Northern CA



Jessalyn H., Southern CA



Lainey T., CA

Missed our Berry Crumble recipe? You can find it along with all of our other recipes on MNITF.org!

WAYS TO GIVE

You can be an important part of continuing the mission of MNITF and helping to save and improve the lives of so many. Financial giving to MNITF creates unique opportunities for us to devote necessary resources to further advancing research and education. Below is a list of ways that you, your family, and friends can help keep the flame of hope alive for potential transplant recipients.



DIRECTED GIVING

With a planned giving strategy, you can earmark your contribution for any area of MNITF's work that you choose, including the Research Grant Program and Education projects.



GIFT OF CASH

This is the simplest and most common type of support. You can make a one-time gift, monthly payments, or pledge to donate over a one- to five-year period.



MEMORIAL OR HONORARIUM GIFTS

This is a gift made in memory of, or in honor of, a loved one. A notification of your gift, with the amount undisclosed, is sent to the recipient indicated.



LIFE INCOME GIFTS

The most common type of life income gifts are charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts.



LIFE INSURANCE

Donating a no longer needed policy entitles you to an immediate tax deduction for the policy's current cash value. This applies to whole life and not term life insurance policies.



BEQUESTS

You can provide a donor's estate with a charitable deduction to offset federal taxes.

If you would like to discuss giving, please contact

Nicole Mendez, Executive Director, at (424) 358-4450 or via email at Nicole@MNITF.org.

WANT TO SAVE THE LIVES OF THOSE WITH END-STAGE ORGAN DISEASE?

MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION OF ANY AMOUNT

There are 2 ways to give: Go to **MNITF.org** and click on the **DONATE** button at the bottom of every page or scan the QR code to donate with your mobile phone.



Your generosity makes our work possible!

WANT UPDATES FROM MNITF? Get the MNITF magazine by email. Visit **MNITF.org/newsletter**.





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Learn more at MNITF.ORG



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