

On Saturday, December 9, 2006 the National Kidney Foundation of Southern California held The 2nd Annual Kwame Brown Toy Drive for disadvantaged renal patients and their families. It was an opportunity for these families' and members' of the renal community to come together and celebrate the holidays without concern for their illnesses and the life saving medical treatments that they endure on a weekly basis.

Kidney related diseases affect approximately 20 million Americans. The two leading causes, which add more people to the list each year, are diabetes and high blood pressure. In addition, there are over 92,000 people waiting for an organ transplant and not enough donors. In order for these patients to survive they must take on pain staking dialysis treatments 3 to 4 times a week, daily medications and the burden of changing their daily routine forever.

Through the National Kidney Foundation's Holiday of Hope Program a partnership was developed with Lakers Kwame Brown to bring a day of celebration and encouragement to the thousands of people affected by this disease in Southern California. Held at the Ritz-Carlton, Marina del Rey this year's event began bright and early with the dedication of several volunteers running around setting up decorations, a Christmas tree, face painting, cookie and ornament decorating stations, Santa's thrown (for pictures with Santa) and the ever so important toy station housing thousands of toys for the hundreds of children dreaming of the gifts they would receive.

Guests' were treated to a renal friendly buffet, basketball hoops, autographs from Lakers Kwame Brown & Vladimir Radmanovic, George Lopez and the Laker Girls. This day of encouragement turned out to be a day of inspiration for all who attended, with both laughter and tears of joy. Patients received the chance to meet heroes, individuals who understand first hand how having this disease affects the entire family.

The 2nd Annual Kwame Brown Toy Drive, a historical event for the National Kidney Foundation of Southern California, will be a day renal patients and their families will remember for a lifetime. Thanks in part to Ann & George Lopez, Lakers Kwame Brown, Bank of America and Wasserman Media Group.

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