



KFA Enters New Era as Rise in Food Allergies Fuels Unprecedented Growth

Fundraising drive underway to ensure continued success

Kids With Food Allergies' "Creating Better Lives Today" fundraising drive is currently underway!

Your donations will allow us to grow and help families even more! Please help today by donating by mail or online or holding a fundraiser. Your donation could change – or save – a child's life.

If you've already contributed to our fundraising campaign, thank you for your support!

For more information, please visit:

www.kidswithfoodallergies.org/donate.html

When a handful of parents started an e-mail list in the late 1990s to help each other cope with their children's food allergies, they had no idea it would become a full-fledged support organization with thousands of members nearly 10 years later.

Kids With Food Allergies, Inc. (KFA)

actually began as a listserv called Parents of Food Allergic Kids, or POFAK™, in September 1998. By 2000, membership reached more than 1,000. Based on this growth, it was obvious that an organized, professionally-led effort was necessary to provide trustworthy food allergy information, food and cooking help, and peer support to families, many of whom are isolated and wanting to connect with other families like them. In 2005, KFA was launched as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization.

Today, KFA is one of the largest nonprofit organizations serving parents of food-allergic kids, offering a powerhouse of support resources to its more than 12,000 members. POFAK™ still remains as the peer support community for parents to communicate and educate, as well as provide a "World of Support" to those learning to adapt to a food allergy lifestyle. This includes Kristin, a member since 2006, who remembers when she first found KFA.

"My [husband] was on a two-week business trip and I was up with my baby, Molly, at 2 a.m., sobbing at my computer because I was at my wit's end about how to manage food allergic living. I didn't know where to turn. I found KFA, registered as an associate member, read some posts in the main forum, and immediately knew I belonged here. I became a Family Member right away," she states.

POFAK has grown from a single large discussion list to a vibrant online community with 23 smaller support groups based on member needs. These range from forums for parents of babies, toddlers and preschoolers, and moms

nursing food allergic children, to three forums dedicated to food and cooking help. The forums are only a small part of KFA's current offerings, which also include an expanding education program, food and cooking assistance program, and outreach efforts.

"KFA is a 'one-stop shop' for all my needs as a parent of a child with food allergies," according to Deanna, another member. "I joined KFA in 2007 when my daughter was 18 months old and had a significant allergic reaction to something I had served her for breakfast. While I was able to see an allergist quickly, without the support of the other parents on KFA, I would not have known all the questions to ask and how to feed and shop for my child."

As food allergies continue to rise, more and more parents are turning to KFA for unmatched peer support and food allergy information. And KFA plans to keep meeting that need. KFA President Lynda Mitchell states, "We're building an amazing community for the benefit of families and their children. It takes donations from those enthusiastic and committed to our cause to help us financially so we can continue to grow."

In the meantime, current members are more than happy with the support they receive from KFA. "Over the years, KFA has become a lifeline of people who 'get it;' people who have been there and done that time and time again," says member, Maxwell's Mom, who found KFA through an Internet search. She says, "I looked for ways to relieve my son's eczema and learn about his food allergies. It's still the first place I go when I need information and support from families like mine who deal with food allergies. I love KFA!"

— Tanya Bumgardner is a freelance writer and parent of a food allergic child.