Health Awareness

Footballer Jerry Rice Makes Big Play For Kidney Health

(NAPSA)—Fans might think Jerry Rice, at 56, should be satisfied to sail silently into the sunset reflecting on his Pro Football Hall of Fame status, three Super Bowl rings, and two decades in the National Football League. Indeed, the iconic wide receiver retired his professional cleats years ago.

Yet, he still uses his youthful, seemingly boundless energy to keep carrying the ball for the cause closest to his heart: tackling chronic kidney disease (CKD).

“My brother Tom has CKD,” Rice said. “I’ve watched him go to dialysis three days a week for years, which is really hard on the body. He’s a very positive individual. Still, sometimes I spend the long hours that he endures just sitting by his side. It was my brother, after all, who loved, encouraged and pushed me early on by telling me that I had to make it to the NFL.”

Getting The Word Out

So that end, in a new PSA series for the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) to be broadcast nationwide, Rice focuses on promoting kidney health and raising awareness of kidney disease. The NKF is the largest, most comprehensive and long-standing organization dedicated to the awareness, prevention and treatment of kidney disease.

Given Rice’s genuine concern about and personal connection to the disease, NKF enlisted the widely beloved sports legend to help to speak to the general public as well as kidney patients. He already has lots of practice doing so up close and personally whenever he joins his brother at a neighborhood dialysis center in Jackson, Miss.

“I’d go there to mainly be with my brother, of course, but I always walk around the room to say hello and socialize with the other dialysis patients,” Rice said. “You don’t realize it until you see for yourself in centres that there are lots of people on dialysis. It puts everything in perspective whenever I start complaining. When I visit the dialysis center, people often know who I am and are happy to see me, and if I can bring a smile to some faces and make them forget even for a second, that warms my heart. That’s how I feel playing football, seeing the smiles in the stands and helping people to forget problems for a little while.”

Rice is also part of NKF’s continuing and growing Heart Your Kidneys (HeartYourKidneys) public campaign to help elevate awareness of the kidneys to the status of other vital organs such as the heart. He is aware that most people know very little about their kidneys and that some don’t know the kidneys are located in the lower back below the rib cage—or that each person has two.

Rice hopes his new PSAs with NKF will help change that.

“It’s important to me to keep working hard to get the word out with NKF because you can see that this really hits home for me in more ways than one,” Rice said.

Kidney Facts And Jerry Rice’s Tips

- African Americans are three times more likely to experience kidney failure than are people of other races.
- Because kidney disease often has no symptoms, it can go unnoticed until it is very advanced.
- The kidneys’ major function is to filter out waste products and excess fluid from the body.
- Eat healthy and drink water instead of sugary drinks.
- Exercise regularly.
- Ask your doctor about your kidney health.

Learn More

For further information about kidney disease and how to tell whether you’re at risk, call (800) 622-9010 or visit www.kidney.org.