



## Press Release

Service to those affected by chronic kidney disease

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Unbreakable Kidney Warriors Rally Cry of Hope and Inspiration

*Winners of 17th Annual Essay Contest Announced by Renal Support Network*

GLENDALE, Calif., September 23, 2019 – Renal Support Network’s (RSN) annual essay contest celebrates its 17th year of providing a voice for people to help share their inspirational story. The theme for this year: **“Kidney Warriors: How do you battle this illness and win?”** allowed writers to share their courageous perspective of survival. Entrants needed to meet only one qualification — to have been diagnosed with chronic kidney disease.

*“We have created a following of amazing writers. We received over 100 essays from all across the United States. I read each one with pride, tears and admiration for the strength of my peers. Judging is very challenging, and I want to give everyone a prize. RSN has a committee of judges who help us determine the winners. It was so close we added a 4<sup>th</sup> place prize and have more honorable mention winners than ever. This year the top five essay winners recorded audio of themselves reading their essays. This new feature offers a unique, personal connection with the listener and has breathed spirited life into their stories. I am blown away by their narrating skill and how the emotional journey was evoked by their readings. We discovered an untapped talent!”* says Lori Hartwell, President and Founder of RSN.

This year’s first place winner, Mary Wu, wrote a poem about mastering her own inner strength and resilience. She said, *“The RSN annual essay contest is an empowering and inspiring outlet for us to share our stories to unify and support each other on our ongoing kidney journey. We are never alone. There is always hope.”*

2019 Essay Contest winners are:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place – *“The Warrior,”* by Mary Wu, Ossining, NY
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place – *“The Cape of Triumph,”* by Sandra Kisselback, East Berne, NY
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place – *“Nephrons of Wisdom from a Kidney Shaken Survivalist,”* by Stacy Hoblitzell, La Pine, OR
- 4<sup>th</sup> Place – *“My Mother’s Tool Box,”* from Joy Araujo, Fishers, IN

RSN is proud to announce the following Honorable Mentions and President’s Pick:

- Honorable Mention – *“Wisdom of Warriors,”* by Lonnie Green, Kennesaw, GA
- Honorable Mention – *“Never Give Up,”* by Ryan Bramlett, New Orleans, LA
- Honorable Mention – *“The Art of War,”* by Guy Churchouse, Huntington Beach, CA
- Honorable Mention – *“Bloodied, Bruised, but not Broken,”* by Michael Schwartz, Horseshoe Bay, TX
- Honorable Mention – *“Kidney 411,”* by Abigail Clary, Healdsburg, CA
- Honorable Mention – *“Iron Warrior,”* by Ferris Anthony, Brunswick, OH
- President’s Pick – *“Yes, I Am,”* by Tim Atkins, Springfield, MO

Lori Hartwell selected *“Yes, I Am,”* by Tim Atkins of Springfield, MO as her President’s Pick: *“Tim Atkins is truly an inspiration to the warriors who are battling kidney disease. He has been on dialysis for over 40 years and even broke the Guinness Book of World Records five years ago. Tim’s essay embodies the healing power of sharing your story to help educate and uplift others traveling the same road.”*

An illness is too demanding when you don’t have hope!

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## Renal Support Network

Cash awards were given for First Place (\$500), Second Place (\$300), Third Place (\$100), Fourth Place (\$100), and Honorable Mentions and President's Pick (\$50 each). All participants and judges of the essay contest receive a complimentary 2020 calendar titled "Creativity Cures the Soul" with inspirational quotes by previous essay winners and artwork by Lori Hartwell.

The number of great essay submissions this year illustrates the potential for hope and inspiration by encouraging other people who are struggling with chronic kidney disease to tell their story. Winning essays and more information about kidney disease and organ donation are available at [www.RSNhope.org](http://www.RSNhope.org).

RSN would like to thank Fresenius Kidney Care, U.S. Renal Care and National Renal Administrators Association for their support of this valuable program that engages people who have kidney disease to tell their story.

RSN is a nonprofit patient-run organization that provides nonmedical services to those affected by chronic kidney disease. RSN strives to help people who are on dialysis, kidney transplant, and newly diagnosed develop their personal coping skills, special talents, and employability by educating and empowering them to take control of the course and management of the disease. [www.RSNhope.org](http://www.RSNhope.org).