



February 3, 2021

## **A Year of Resilience, A Vision for the Future, and a Ruby**

Dear Friends,

Saying farewell to 2020 was not exactly a difficult task. The year was a challenge on many levels and all of us were ready to see it come to an end. And yet, with 2021 well under way, we are reminded that change comes not to those who celebrate the calendar but rather to those who make it. I look forward to making change with you this year.

Though the past year was difficult, you all made it a meaningful one for the AAFA family. Thanks to support from you, our **COVID response** provided over 200 Missouri School districts asthma related back-to-school kits. These were complete with inhalers to be used in emergency situations, when nebulizers could not be used, due to their being a risk of spreading the virus. Helping and working with school nurses has long been a focus for AAFA and it will only grow. I was thrilled to partner with Asthma Ready Communities at the University of Missouri, Missouri Healthy Schools, WellCare, and Home State Health to make this happen collectively.

The incidence of **food allergies** continues to grow in the US and we heard from many partners and friends about how we can play a more positive role in alleviating the suffering and building community for those with this challenge. We heard many of you call out for more education - both for those *with* food allergies as well as those *around* them, more opportunities to connect and learn from each other, increasing opportunities to consider safe dining out (once COVID allows) and the right partnerships to make all this a possibility. Also, we heard that you share our concern about those with food allergies, who also face food insecurity. 2021 will bring real work on all of these initiatives as we approach our role as a better leader in the food allergy space with renewed seriousness and hope.

In 2020 AAFA published [Asthma Disparities in America](#), a report outlining how the burden of asthma in the United States falls disproportionately on Black, Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native people. These groups have the highest asthma rates, deaths and hospitalizations. This is something we can and must address. Reinvigorated with the power of this knowledge we are committed to serving all children, with a keen awareness of those who lack access to health resources and who are likely to suffer most. This is not just a report though. It serves as an action plan. 2021 will be the year we endeavor to address action items around Structural, Social, Biological, and Behavioral determinants of health. No twelve month span allows enough time to

alleviate all issues, but no single day can be allowed to pass without us making at least one stride toward a better result for kids. 2021 will be full of programmatic, educational, legislative and collaboration work, all pointed in the direction of both granular and systemic changes that will help kids thrive.

A 40th Anniversary is known as the “Ruby” Anniversary. A Ruby is said to burn with the passion it takes to carry a relationship forward for four decades. And for four decades AAFA-STL’s founders, supporters and staff have had the passion it takes to keep the cause alive. Stay engaged as we spend the year remembering and celebrating a long and storied history and as we honor the forty years in the most special way possible; by building on a tradition of innovation with even more great work.

I am grateful for the resilience we have learned as a family during our common struggle of a global pandemic and our work to help kids breathe. With your support and passion and a vision for increased impact in the future we can use this anniversary year to recalibrate our role, partner with like-minded change makers, and begin a path toward unprecedented impact. Our founders expect it. Our families deserve it. And we are ready.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Martinez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chris Martinez