The earliest traces of arthritis date back to prehistoric times, detected in the fossils of dinosaurs. The first signs of arthritis in humans were found in the skeletal remains of Native Americans, going back as far as 4500 BC. Today, arthritis is the world’s most prevalent disease. And it’s far more serious than most people realize. In the United States, at least 54 million adults – one in four – have doctor-diagnosed arthritis. Two-thirds are under the age of 65, including 300,000 children. It’s common among athletes and those with physically-demanding jobs. Our servicemen and women are at the forefront of this growing crisis.

Arthritis damages vital organs and makes other conditions worse, resulting in 100 million doctor visits and 7 million hospitalizations every year. And it contributes to early death in combination with other diseases. Besides preventing people from performing everyday tasks, arthritis keeps them from doing the things they love. It can cause depression and feelings of being left out of life.

Since 1948, the Arthritis Foundation has been the largest, most trusted nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention, control and cure of all forms of arthritis. We’re the largest private funder of arthritis research, investing half a billion dollars in research projects over the past seven decades. We remain committed to making an even greater difference in people’s lives.

In this 2017 Annual Report, we take you from the past to the present and into the future. Through 70 years of distinguished service to the arthritis community, our influence and impact have been far-reaching and unstoppable. There are still tough challenges to tackle. But as always, we’re forging promising, new paths to help conquer them. And we won’t let anything get in our way.

Thank you for being part of our important work.
In 1948, the founders of the Arthritis Foundation envisioned a voluntary organization that would lead an attack against the oldest group of diseases known to humankind. There were only seven locations in the country that trained doctors in rheumatology and only six research and treatment centers. There was very little interest in arthritis. The general consensus among both physicians and the public was that "nothing much can be done." Our mission seemed impossible. But we proved we’re unstoppable against arthritis and have made significant progress over the years. The journey continues.
1948: 7.5 Million With Arthritis

By the mid-1940s, 7.5 million Americans suffered from arthritis or another form of rheumatic disease. The Arthritis and Rheumatism Foundation was founded in 1948 “to do something about it.” This new nonprofit organization, later shortened to just the Arthritis Foundation, set out to attack the problem. The Foundation began developing a national program – and raising funds – to finance arthritis research and provide better medical services for patients. Later that year, we launched our first national campaign, chaired by world-renowned entertainer Bob Hope, to raise $2 million.

1958: 11 Million With Arthritis

During our first decade, local Arthritis Foundation chapters were formed across the country. They supported 200 treatment centers, along with a few dozen “traveling clinics” for those who were bedridden at home. Skilled physical therapists made 77,000 visits to homebound patients by the time the Foundation’s 10th anniversary rolled around. We helped get disabled workers back to work through rehabilitation programs. We started a public education effort, using newspapers, radio, TV and publications to raise awareness. Research pressed forward in several disciplines, from immunology to biochemistry.

1968: 16 Million With Arthritis

In the sixties, our educational programs expanded. More and more famous people got on board to spotlight arthritis – Lucille Ball, Jimmy Stewart, Walt Disney and many others. The Arthritis Foundation also reached out to groups of doctors, nurses, therapists and other health professionals to share the latest technical knowledge. In 1968, as the national mood shifted to social issues, we called out the “Silent 16 Million” Americans with arthritis – and the fact that the disease made them poor, unable to lead normal, productive lives. We demanded greater federal funding for research.

1978: 31 Million With Arthritis

By 1978, 31 million Americans suffered from arthritis, double the number from a decade before. The Arthritis Foundation was supporting rapid advances in research on human cells. Since our inception, almost 400 scientists had been trained through Foundation fellowships. An arsenal of new drugs had been developed. Joint replacement surgery was saving thousands of patients from lifelong immobility. That same year, we helped identify infectious Lyme disease as a form of arthritis. On the air, Arthritis Foundation telethons – featuring stars like Bing Crosby, Mary Tyler Moore, Carol Burnett, Betty White and many more – raised crucial donations to make our work possible.

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“No one will be safe from the threat of pain and deformity until arthritis and its allies are conquered.”

– 1948 Arthritis and Rheumatism Foundation Annual Report

“It is not acceptable in our society that millions of people with so terrible an affliction should continue to be given the short end of the stick.”

– William S. Clark, MD, Arthritis Foundation President, 1968

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1980s

The Arthritis Foundation spearheaded key victories in the eighties. By the time the Foundation turned 40 in 1988, we had further strengthened our commitment to research. We secured more federal funding for arthritis projects. We were instrumental in studies leading to an innovative treatment for pediatric arthritis. By then, most forms of the disease—now affecting 37 million Americans—were being better controlled. Our telethons continued raising essential dollars. The Jingle Bell Run started in 1984. That same year, we held our first National Juvenile Arthritis Conference. In 1987, we launched Arthritis Today magazine, putting reliable information about arthritis into the hands of consumers.

1990s

By 1998 – the Arthritis Foundation’s 50th anniversary – 43 million people in this country lived with arthritis. We emphasized the importance of early diagnosis, appropriate treatment and patient self-management. We worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to launch a National Arthritis Action Plan to touch more lives. New pharmaceutical therapies came to market. Behind the scenes, we were making headway in the science that would lead to development of the first biologics and change the landscape of arthritis. Wheelchairs wouldn’t be needed as much. Better quality of life was returning.

2000s

In the first decade of the 21st century, the number of Americans with arthritis grew to 46 million. The same grants that funded early arthritis research were still hard at work. We remained committed to creating a world free from arthritis pain. We launched the Walk to Cure Arthritis fundraiser, still our largest signature event. We continued making significant investments in research, education and advocacy. We developed screening tools to facilitate early diagnosis and treatment, pointing out that arthritis increased the risk of diabetes and heart disease. We partnered with the Ad Council on a new public service campaign promoting physical activity.

2010s

This decade, the Arthritis Foundation focused on the work we do best, fine-tuning our research strategy, increasing access to care, bolstering our juvenile arthritis programs and strengthening community resources, both in person and online. We began speeding up the scientific discovery process to bring new medications to market faster. We called attention to the disproportionate incidence of arthritis among U.S. military personnel, appealing for more federal funding for arthritis-related research. We put arthritis patients at the front and center of everything we do. Through new digital tools, expanded outreach and diverse partnerships, we set the stage for even greater progress to come.

Our goal continues to be the eventual elimination of arthritis as a cause of human suffering and economic burden to our nation.”

– Ronald Reagan, U.S. President, 1983 Arthritis Proclamation

“It’s been a tough road, very scary for my children and for all of us. I don’t think people understand.”

– Tatum O’Neal, Oscar-winning actress diagnosed with RA, 2016 Arthritis Today cover story
Today, the Arthritis Foundation is on the leading edge of changing the future of arthritis. Our patient-centered approach makes sure we’re serving the arthritis community in ways that matter to them. We’re the conduit for community connections — helping people with arthritis and their loved ones reach out and support one another, to find courage and encouragement. As we turn 70, we’re motivated by how far we’ve come — and how important our current work is for the years ahead.
Putting Patients First

As an organization with a long history of working for and with people who have arthritis, the Arthritis Foundation has always encouraged the active involvement of patients in their own care.

We know for a fact that those who have a say in their treatment plans do better. Their perspectives matter greatly when it comes to decisions being made about their health care.

While engaging patients is nothing new to the Arthritis Foundation’s work, what is new is the expanded role patients play today – as advisors and expert partners – across the entire health care continuum.

Instead of just being passengers in their journey with arthritis, patients are now co-pilots and even pilots.

Patients have so much to offer beyond advocacy and research. To ensure their perspectives are present at every stage of health care, we formed our Patient Leadership Council in 2017. This group infuses the patient voice into our efforts while also shaping the system that serves them.

Finding Her Voice

When Anna Legassie was diagnosed with arthritis at age 11, her doctor said she would need to begin using a wheelchair. Years later, in 2015, she crossed the finish line of her first Spartan Race, a grueling five-mile obstacle course she fiercely fought her way through.

At 14, Anna had both hips replaced and would undergo four more hip surgeries in the years ahead; she’s also had one wrist and three knee surgeries. Now 35 and living in Boston, Anna volunteers as an Arthritis Foundation Platinum Ambassador, Massachusetts advocacy chair and serves on the national advocacy committee. She’s also the 2018 Walk to Cure Arthritis national adult honoree.

Anna has enthusiastically embraced her advocacy tasks, meeting with congressional representatives to gain support for arthritis-related policies and testifying before committees about drug prices and copay assistance.

“I know this will help create a better future for other patients,” Anna says. “I truly found the motivation to use my voice and experience, not just for myself, but also on behalf of others.”

How We Help

► TOOLS

Our Your Coverage, Your Care Toolkit sheds light on coverage options, how to get appropriate, affordable treatment and how to fight claim denials.

We offer numerous life-changing tools to make living with arthritis easier – ways to live better, relieve pain, track progress and more, whether you’re at home or on the go.

► SUPPORT

Get in-person support right where you live – from local Arthritis Support Network groups forming nationwide to our Living Your Yes With RA and Living Made Easier events expanding to more locations.

24/7, reach out to us to better understand your arthritis, get referrals and advice, ask insurance questions and more. Our Arthritis Resource Finder is at your fingertips online, and our Helpline experts are standing by to assist you toll-free: 844-571-HELP.

► LEADERSHIP

Our Prescription for Access initiative brings together patients, providers and others for open dialogue to create change in health care.

Our Patient Leadership Council, a diverse group of arthritis patients from all walks of life, ensures that patients are represented in everything we do.
Advancing OA Treatment

We call arthritis a “disease” as an umbrella term for a very complex illness. There are actually more than 100 forms of arthritis. It’s a group of chronic diseases in which joint disorders are the common thread.

The Arthritis Foundation is working on solutions for all forms of arthritis, including ankylosing spondylitis, fibromyalgia, gout, psoriatic arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and many others. Discoveries we make – and the new treatments they lead to – advance our goal of conquering arthritis and changing the future for millions.

Osteoarthritis affects more people than any other form of arthritis – over 30 million adults in the U.S. OA often goes undiagnosed until joint damage has occurred. Existing remedies only relieve symptoms and improve function temporarily. But joints continue to deteriorate until expensive joint replacement is the only option.

With our long-standing, reputable position in the arthritis community, the Arthritis Foundation has the unique ability to remove barriers that prevent investment in OA drug development and make treatment options available.

Inventing an Arthritis Vaccine

Farshid Guilak, PhD, has championed unbelievable breakthroughs in orthopedic and osteoarthritis research. Since 2016, his work has appeared in 25 respected scientific publications. He and his team have found a way to grow new cartilage on a hip joint-shaped scaffold using stem cells.

Dr. Guilak’s latest Arthritis Foundation-funded project is just as trailblazing, using genetically-engineered smart stem cells to zero in on inflamed cells and stop the inflammation. This “arthritis vaccine” delivers customized drug treatment to a specific area and begins the cell repair process through a biologic product.

Dr. Guilak is the epitome of a Champion of Yes, actively participating in our fundraising and awareness-building events and interacting in social media to promote our work. In 2017, he received the Foundation’s Howley Prize, earning an additional $10,000 for more research.

“The Arthritis Foundation is very proud of Dr. Guilak and his team,” says Guy S. Eakin, PhD, senior VP of scientific strategy. “This is truly the next generation of treatment for joint replacements.”

How We Help

RESEARCH
Arthritis Foundation-funded research projects today are showing amazing results, from growing new cartilage to developing an arthritis vaccine.

LEADERSHIP
Our multicenter OA Clinical Trial Network is accelerating patient recruitment and data analysis, while reducing the time and expense of bringing new therapies to those who need them.

COMMUNITY
Our groundbreaking 2017 Patient-Focused Drug Development meeting shared patient points of view to inform the FDA’s benefit/risk framework.

SINCE 1948
$500,000,000 invested in arthritis research. Arthritis Foundation-funded scientists were key to the discovery of biologics and other major interventions, changing the future for all forms of arthritis.

Inventing an Arthritis Vaccine

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How We Help

RESEARCH
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LEADERSHIP
We’ve established the OA Center of Excellence to transform OA research through new trials and by ensuring data sharing to identify diagnostic biomarkers for each stage of OA.

INFLUENCE
Because of the damaging effects of OA on the country’s armed forces, we continue to advocate alongside health and veterans’ groups to ensure federal funding as a national health priority.
Conquering Juvenile Arthritis

Arthritis is tough for anyone. But especially heartbreaking is the toll it takes on children and their families. Juvenile arthritis and other pediatric rheumatic diseases affect nearly 300,000 families in the U.S. – that’s one in every 250 children.

Since the Arthritis Foundation began, we’ve called attention to how devastating this disease is for young people. Most people are surprised when they learn that children can get arthritis. When JA strikes, there can be many other complications – in the heart, lungs, eyes and other organs. Children with arthritis face a lengthy process of trial-and-error medications, which can be painful and debilitating for both the child and parents.

Conquering JA is among the Foundation’s top priorities. We launched our first National JA Conference in 1984, the largest gathering of kids, teens and young adults with all types of rheumatic conditions, along with their families. Together, they learn ways to manage JA’s challenges, share stories and advice, and make lifelong friends.

We’re the largest nonprofit organization providing programs, resources and community for those with JA, including camp experiences, family days, a teen mentoring program and scholarships for college-bound youth with arthritis.

Super Tough Kid

The Huss family of Minnesota first came face to face with arthritis in 2010 when Kenley, then just over a year old, was diagnosed with JA. It wreaked havoc on her knees and several other joints, causing unexplained fevers and pain no toddler should experience.

Kenley, now 9, as well as her parents, Dongi and Jason, and younger brother, Brady, have gone all-in to fight JA. They’ve organized and hosted dozens of personal fundraisers on behalf of the Arthritis Foundation, including a golf tournament, bingo games and card sales.

“As Kenley has gotten older, she has become more involved in fundraising,” says her mother. Kenley was thrilled to be named the 2018 Walk to Cure Arthritis national youth honoree. Over the past six years, she and her team, Kenley’s Krew, have raised $47,000.

Today, Kenley’s symptoms are manageable, thanks to effective treatments. Weekly injections and staying on top of things otherwise seem to be doing the trick. “As long as her medication is working, she does everything her friends do,” says Dongi. “It’s important for people to know there are a lot of super tough kids out there battling and dealing with this.”
Growing the Movement

Year after year, the Arthritis Foundation builds on our rich history. Our work is focused and patient-centered. Our fundraising events and advocacy and awareness-building efforts keep moving the needle.

In 1984, we launched our annual Jingle Bell Run fundraiser, the largest holiday-themed 5K race for charity. Our Walk to Cure Arthritis began in 2001 and is our biggest signature fundraising event. Together, both bring in a quarter of the funds we invest in research and other initiatives. Additional major fundraisers propel us even further, from biking events to extraordinary galas and everything in between.

Our growing army of committed Advocates and Ambassadors demands that people with arthritis be heard in federal and state legislative debates affecting them. Our website and social media channels reach millions of unique visitors, keeping them updated on the latest research discoveries, lifestyle advice and inspiring stories about victories over arthritis.

In 2017, comedian and TV host Matt Iseman represented our cause on “The New Celebrity Apprentice,” led by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Matt competed against 15 other contestants and was ultimately crowned the champion, donating almost $1 million in winnings to the Arthritis Foundation.

Since 2014, our army has increased access to care for more than 51 million people by helping enact over 70 laws in 43 states.

How We Help

► ADVOCAUGHTMENA

We guide arthritis warriors and their loved ones to take action through advocacy at the federal and state levels – meeting with lawmakers, signing petitions and speaking out at policy hearings to help remove barriers to health care.

Together, we were actively involved in 2017 in 163 policies in 39 states, passing 17 local laws that increase access to care.

Thanks to our ongoing work, the Congressional Arthritis Caucus is now comprised of a quarter of all elected officials in Congress, to ensure this disease isn’t forgotten in legislative decisions.

► ENGAGEMENT

The Walk to Cure Arthritis, Jingle Bell Run and other fundraising events around the country connect us while raising money for more research and resources.

Our Fight for 50 campaign reached more than 15 million people on Facebook and Twitter, driving 600 story submissions.

Taller and Stronger

Charcandrick West just wanted to pursue his passion for football, which he got hooked on around age 6. On the field, he looked up at his glowing parents and other spectators in the stands who cheered him on for giving the game his all.

The toughest obstacle Charcandrick faced was in high school, when he learned that arthritis was his worst enemy. The pain, fevers and incapacitation were almost unbearable. It took a year and a half to get to the bottom of what was ailing him and start the medications he needed.

Charcandrick got back up to speed in his classroom and on the gridiron – and he excelled. “I’ve been brought to my knees at times,” he admits, “but these hardships have helped me stand even taller and stronger than before.”

Charcandrick has made his hometown in Louisiana proud. Now 26, he’s a star running back for the Kansas City Chiefs in the NFL. And his passion off the field is to encourage others, especially kids with JA, to believe they can conquer their dreams no matter what, like he has.
No organization is more determined or better positioned to conquer arthritis than the Arthritis Foundation. Everything we do is paving the way for more remarkable progress – and a brighter future – for everyone who lives with this debilitating disease. People with arthritis count on us for the most current information about treatment options, new discoveries and disease management. The innovations we’re spearheading today will extend our reach and strengthen our impact, thanks to your generous support.
The Arthritis Foundation’s business is to change lives—instilling hope and a sense of home for the 54 million Americans who live with it. Last year, more than 22 million unique visitors came to our website, anonymously. We want to put a name and face to them. Ask them to engage with us and enlighten the whole community. Online and in person, the Live Yes! Arthritis Network will harness, guide and amplify the energy of individuals so that, together, we can help more people with arthritis.

Live Yes! will tie all of our constituents’ interactions with us together. Local meet-ups and online forums are already getting people excited about the possibilities ahead. And it’s giving our most engaged volunteers an energizing, new way to play a bigger leadership role. Together, we are connecting the digital world and the physical world.

Suzanne Taylor (on the right) got connected with the Arthritis Foundation after being diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. She checked out our pamphlets and participated in Foundation-led aquatic classes at her gym, the only exercise she could do.

“The Arthritis Foundation helped make a positive impact on how I coped with this life-altering disease,” she says.

In short order, Suzanne—a successful architect and business owner in Oklahoma—joined the local Arthritis Foundation board, then our national board. She immersed herself in fundraisers, like the Jingle Bell Run, Walk to Cure Arthritis and Bone Bash. She became an avid Advocate and has participated in our National JA Conference.

Suzanne is now a co-leader of our Be the One committee, urging support for our groundbreaking initiatives that will help change the future of arthritis. “This disease needs solutions we’re right on the edge of achieving,” she says.

The future of arthritis is here. Be the ONE to make the change.

Our four patient-centered, breakthrough initiatives will change fates and the future of arthritis.

Creating the Live Yes! Arthritis Network
Each person’s arthritis journey is different. Sharing can make a difference.

ONLINE
We’ll deliver a meaningful digital experience through online community forums built around important topics.

IN PERSON
We’ll facilitate inspiring face-to-face connections through local community events.

Participation in the Live Yes! Arthritis Network will directly increase a person’s physical mobility, emotional well-being and social connectedness. We are directly affecting the quality of life for people with arthritis.

Advancing Osteoarthritis Treatment
Conquering Childhood Arthritis
Cultivating a New Generation of Rheumatologists
Collaborating With Patients for Better Health
We’re grateful to our donors for making us UnSTOPpable against ARTHRITIS in 2017.

PARTICIPATION AOII
The sisters of AOII contribute their time, talents and fundraising efforts to support Arthritis Foundation initiatives — volunteering their time at programs and events, distributing baskets at the JA Conference and hosting a wide array of fundraisers throughout the year that support the Arthritis Foundation’s mission.
CORPORATE IMPACT AWARD
AbbVie

AbbVie has invested more than $1.5 million in the Arthritis Foundation from their employee engagement programs to corporate support. Together, we are making an impact in the lives of people living with arthritis.

Cory Varnes
AbbVie

Arthritis Foundation | 2017 Donors

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Restricted gifts to support the Arthritis Foundation's scientific agenda to create an OA Center of Excellence, improved health outcomes for juvenile arthritis, coproducing care plans between doctors and patients, and rheumatology fellowships.

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Financial Highlights†
In 2017, the Arthritis Foundation invested over $42 million in research and public health education. We grew bequest revenue and investments by more than $12.6 million and decreased expenses by $6.5 million in 2017 over 2015.

Expenses $78.9 M
- Public Health Education $30.0 M
- Patient & Community Services $16.0 M
- Research $12.0 M
- Fundraising $10.0 M
- Management & General $9.0 M
- Professional Education & Training $1.9 M

Revenue & Public Support $90.4 M
- Contributions $26.2 M‡
- Special Events (net) $19.2 M
- Bequests $19.1 M
- Other Income, including Government Grants $10.6 M
- Subtotal Donor & Other Income $75.1 M
- Investment & Other Non-operating Income $15.3 M

Net Assets End-of-Year: $158.8 M

Complete audited financial statements are available online at arthritis.org/financials.
† The creation of a centralized and unified structure has enabled us to operate with greater consistency and efficiency while eliminating redundancies. As expected, the operational change resulted in a stronger bottom line.

‡ Includes $13M in pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical device corporate support, representing 14% of total organization revenue.