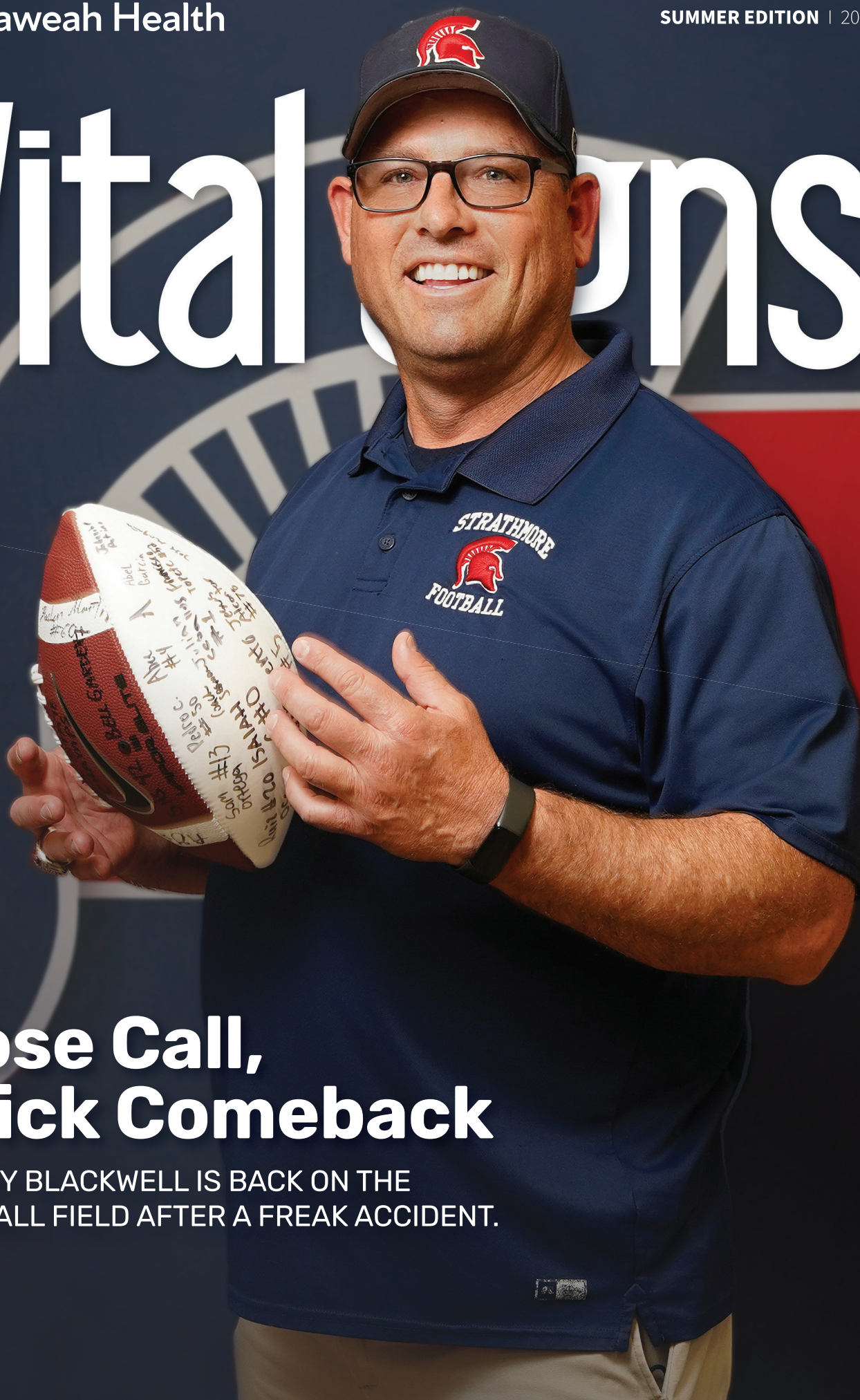


# Vital Moments



## Close Call, Quick Comeback

JEROMY BLACKWELL IS BACK ON THE  
FOOTBALL FIELD AFTER A FREAK ACCIDENT.

# Vital Signs

SUMMER EDITION | 2024

## Vital Signs

is a publication of  
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Jeromy Blackwell is back on the  
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LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Kaweah Health Community,

As Kaweah Health enters its 2024-25 fiscal year, we are pleased to look back and share the many positive developments across our organization. The important trend over the last year has been the ongoing increase in our revenue and the streamlining of processes, which has cut costs and improved profitability. As a result, we have been experiencing steady growth, which has helped maintain our financial health. The ability of our organization to meet the many challenges of today faced by businesses and families alike, is a testament to the people from our community who are part of the Kaweah Health team and help make it great.

In growing our leadership, I am very excited to welcome Dr. Paul Stefanacci as our new Chief Medical & Quality Officer. As our top physician leader, he oversees all medical aspects of our operations, ensuring we uphold the highest standards of quality, safety, and patient care. Dr. Stefanacci’s expertise will be instrumental in guiding Kaweah Health toward continued excellence.

We have also continued to improve access to health care services in Visalia, with the addition of prompt care (no appointment, walk-in) at the Kaweah Health Medical Clinic on Plaza Drive. Our newest clinic, located on the northwest side of Visalia, serves the many businesses there with workers’ compensation and will soon offer occupational health services as well. More options in more locations means people across Visalia can benefit from prompt care access to health care closer to their homes.

I am excited to announce the recent acquisition of the infusion center operated by Sequoia Oncology Medical Associates (SOMA), our long-time partner at Sequoia Regional Cancer Center (SRCC), which is Tulare County’s most advanced cancer treatment facility. SOMA is the group of physicians led by Dr. Robert Havard, who specialize in the use of medication in the treatment of cancer. We look forward to continuing our partnership with this group of doctors and their care team, who have helped so many in our community in their fight against cancer.

On May 21, I had the honor of speaking at the dedication ceremony for the Kaweah Health Reflection Garden and Monument. This gift was made possible by the Kaweah Health Foundation and the many donors it works with. It serves as a place of solace and peace and was created to help us honor the countless lives that have been touched by our caregivers over Kaweah Health’s 61-year history. We hope that it serves as a beacon of hope, a source of inspiration, and a testament to the enduring spirit of compassion that defines our organization.

As always, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated team of caregivers, whose unwavering commitment to excellence continues to inspire us all. Together, we remain steadfast in our mission to provide exceptional healthcare services to the residents of Tulare County.



**Gary Herbst**  
Chief Executive Officer of  
Kaweah Health

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# Back in Action



## Modern spine surgery techniques can provide life-changing results.

**T**he spine, our body's backbone, is a marvel of nature. It's made up of bones, nerves, and tissues working together to support us. But oftentimes, an injury or wear and tear can press on the nerves and cause a lot of pain. Generally, doctors attempt to address patients' spine issues through physical therapy whenever possible. However, if the injury is too severe or therapy does not work, consulting an orthopedic spine surgeon is often the best option.

Orthopedics is the branch of medicine that focuses on disorders and injuries to the musculoskeletal system — your bones, muscles, joints, and other connective tissues. For many people with joint injuries or pain, orthopedic surgeons can make a huge difference in quality of life. Orthopedic surgeons can restore function

by repairing a wide range of conditions, such as fractures, joint injuries, sports injuries, arthritis, congenital disorders, and degenerative diseases. For some patients, that might mean just being able to get out of bed in the morning.

Visalia native Mann Harrison had been living with progressively worsening back pain for years. By 2023, his condition had become so severe that he could barely leave his bed, and even the simplest movements were an immense struggle.

"After a while, I could barely move around. I was desperate for some kind of relief," he recalls. "Dr. Feng was one of the doctors who saw me in the hospital, and he told me he could help."

Frank L. Feng, DO, an orthopedic surgeon at Sequoia Orthopaedic & Spine Institute in Visalia, is one of the many trusted surgeons who perform complex surgeries at Kaweah Health.



He treats most orthopedic conditions and performs many types of surgeries including spine, total joint replacements, carpal tunnel, as well as treatment of fractures, both surgically and non-surgically. In addition, Dr. Feng helps patients with pain management through procedures like epidural injections, spinal cord stimulators, and pain pumps. For more than 25 years, he has been dedicated to helping countless individuals like Mann, and finds immense fulfillment in his work.

“I truly strive to assist people with difficult problems,” Dr. Feng says. “Spinal conditions can be life-altering and sometimes life-threatening, and I want to help them regain a better quality of life. It’s incredibly gratifying for both me and my staff to be able to make such a positive impact.”

◀ Dr. Frank Feng has been an orthopedic surgeon in Visalia for more than 25 years.

▼ Dr. Feng’s team, L-R: Rhonda King, Robbie Sanchez, Sonora Hurt, Yolanda Tamez, Haven Bahr, Angela Tapia, Leslie Ware



In Mann’s case, the tissue between the vertebrae in his spine had become damaged due to wear and tear from years of sports and construction work.

“Over time and consistent use, these tissues can degrade, causing the bones in your spine to compress and pinch nerves, which can result in severe pain,” Dr. Feng explains. “That was precisely Mann’s situation. His nerves were being pinched so severely that his pain was constant and debilitating. He also had an undiagnosed stress fracture in the back of the spinal column.”

To remedy the intense, daily pain Mann was experiencing, Dr. Feng performed a spinal fusion surgery. This procedure involves permanently joining two or more vertebrae in the spine to relieve pain, correct issues, and restore stability. The fusion prevents movement between the vertebrae, aiming to reduce discomfort. Surgeons insert bone or bonelike material between the vertebrae, sometimes using metal plates, screws, or rods to hold them in place.

For Mann, the result was truly life-changing.

“I am a completely different man today,” he says. “I am walking again, and there is no more nerve pain.”

Dr. Feng affirms that outcomes from spinal fusion surgery are typically very positive.

“The technology and techniques available today are better than ever, and patients are able to regain a much higher quality of life,” he says. KH



— “  
***I’m lucky to  
still be here.  
My doctors  
and nurses  
literally saved  
my life.***

— ”  
— Mann Harrison on  
his successful spinal  
fusion surgery.





# Labor of Love

Meet the teams delivering and caring for the next generation of Tulare County.

**T**he Kaweah Health Family Birthing Center consists of the Labor and Delivery and Mother Baby Units, two of the busiest units at Kaweah Health Medical Center, helping bring more than 350 babies each month into the Central Valley community. With thousands of babies delivered each year, there are people coming and going 24/7, and families grow larger by the hour.

For expecting mothers and their families, the Labor and Delivery Unit is where most women begin their journey. Nurse Manager Laura Robertson is in charge of

close to 100 nurses, surgical techs, and support staff who work in the Labor and Delivery Unit of Kaweah Health.

“It’s an exciting place to be, and we really enjoy sharing this important time with all of the women who have their babies here,” says Laura. “Your birth story is something very special you remember forever, so we really try to make everything perfect for our patients” she says. **KH**





### ▲ Labor and Delivery Unit

It takes a small army working around the clock to deliver more than 4,200 babies each year. Some of the more than 90 team members in the Labor and Delivery Unit:

Front, L-R: Kendra Oliveira, Alyssa Oppedyk, Gigi Panis-Wells, Laura Robertson, Merlie Em Bui, Shana Hartsell, Abby Plein, Lane Stanley, Vanessa Avalos, Karin Ross, Deca Fry-Collins, Vanessa Martinez, Alicia Espinoza, Giana Arellano

Back, L-R: Christine Daniel, Sarah Vilhauer, Kim Thompson, Daniela Toste, Zaide Dizon, Sarah Weldon, Sienna Ortiz, Amanda Escalante, Adriana Martinez, Crystal Alford



### ▲ Special Delivery

Registered nurses Yvonne Nguyen (L) and Christine Daniel (R) were working together the day they helped deliver their future coworker Lane Stanley (seated), who is now a registered nurse as well in the Labor and Delivery Unit.





## Mother and Baby

**A**fter giving birth, both mom and the new baby (or babies!) are moved to the Mother Baby Unit, where plenty of support is given to help both parties reach the best health possible. Nurse Manager Stephanie Genetti oversees this busy department and its steady flow of mothers, babies, and family members who come through every day.

“It’s hard to believe that more than 4,200 babies are born here each year,” she says. “Our team is always busy, but we take pride in taking good care of the moms who come through here.”

Stephanie adds there is a lot of empathy that comes with being a nurse here.

“A lot of the women on our team are moms, and quite a few of us had our babies here, so we know firsthand the emotions people are experiencing,” she says. “We make sure that everyone gets the care and attention they need to feel confident and have a great experience.”

The Labor and Delivery and Mother Baby Units are committed to providing support and education to any mother seeking it. Patients can meet with Kaweah Health’s Lactation Services before birth, during hospitalization, and even after discharge. The units strive to create an environment that promotes long-term health, which includes adhering to the latest research such as skin-to-skin contact and delayed bathing to increase bonding. **KH**





## ▲ Mother Baby Unit

### Some of the more than 70 team members in the Mother Baby Unit:

Seated, L-R: Jazz De Vera, Shelly Mena, Jenna Garcia, Norma Quintero, Lorena Guzman, Jamie Rodriguez

Middle, L-R: Kristy Saesee, Kiana Guerra, Sarah Toomey, Mia Romero, Yanneth Gonzalez-Herrera, Maria Cervantes, Megan Markel, EePaeng See, Eevoy Saesee, Crystal Hernandez, Eemo Saesee, Ashley Alvarez, Catherine Lopez, Mckenzie Ferreira, Ginger Scott, Alexis Ramirez, Selene Santoyo

Back, L-R: Katherine Gray, Kathie Wallen, Amrit Kaur, Natasha Tindle, Shantell Harriagan, Karla Ledezma, Arianna Myrick, Sarah Pallas, Stephanie Genetti, Lea Torres, Alexsandra Hernandez, Tahnee Reyes, Ramona Cullen, Cassandra Sanchez, Raquel Hartman, Julie Marlton

### Looking for Support?

Learn more about having a baby at Kaweah Health at [KaweahHealth.org/Baby](https://www.KaweahHealth.org/Baby).




Scan the code to learn more about our many support services for mothers and families including Family Birthing Center tours, prepared childbirth classes, lactation services, support groups, and more.



▲ Certified lactation counselors Julie Marlton and Raquel Hartman offer free breastfeeding support to new mothers, both in the hospital or over the phone.

Call (559) 624-6012 to talk with them today.





# Close Call, Quick Comeback

Strathmore  
football coach  
makes a  
remarkable  
journey.

**S**trathmore High School ended its 2023 football season with a winning streak that stretched into the playoffs and didn't stop until they had won their second state championship in seven years. It was an amazing run for coach Jeromy Blackwell and his team, but even more amazing considering Jeromy's scary accident and recovery over that previous summer.

On June 30, 2023, Jeromy was barbecuing some lunch and working in his backyard when he got his feet tangled up with the family's 14-year-old Yorkie poodle.

"That's the last thing I remember," says Jeromy. "I reached out for the patio cover support to catch myself, but couldn't hold on."

Jeromy fell off-balance, face first into the concrete, knocking himself unconscious. For almost two hours, he lay unconscious in the 100-plus degree summer heat.

Fortunately, his wife Caroline went outside to check on him and discovered him face down in a puddle of mud, making gurgling sounds. She quickly called 911 and emergency responders transported





Jeromy to Kaweah Health Medical Center, where he was diagnosed with severe dehydration, a concussion, heatstroke, and pneumonia from inhaling mud. Due to his critical condition, doctors decided to aid his recovery by inducing a coma. A medically-induced coma is a controlled, reversible slowdown of brain function that can protect the brain after a severe injury.

Eight days later, doctors brought Jeromy out of the coma, while surrounded by family and friends. Jeromy was confused at what had happened.

“My first memory was seeing my daughter, wife, and high school football coach,” he says. “I had no idea what had happened. Even today, it’s hard to believe.”

Jeromy still had some more healing to do before going home, and he is forever grateful to all of the people who helped care for him.

“My nurses were amazing — protective, and always looking out for me,” he says. “When I woke up, I was afraid to fall asleep because I was scared I wouldn’t wake up again, but my nurses were so good to me, and helped me get through it. My doctors and nurses literally saved my life.”



Jeromy went home later that month, and at the start of the school year, he was back on his feet, ready for one of the best coaching seasons of his life. He looks back at his experience and recovery with a humble gratitude.

“Those moments have changed my life. They gave me more focus and taught me to live more purposefully,” he says. “Just like everyone who helped save my life, we are here to spread the good and help each other.” KH

◀  
Jeromy Blackwell was back in action at football practice just two months after his hospitalization.



— “

***I’m lucky to still be here. My doctors and nurses literally saved my life.***

— ”

— Jeromy Blackwell on his recovery at Kaweah Health Medical Center.



# A Monumental Project

Kaweah Health teams come together to create a special place of healing and reflection.

In 2022, nurses at Kaweah Health approached the organization with an idea to create a space for caregivers to find solace and reflection. The proposal struck a chord, and Kaweah Health's Marketing Department began brainstorming concepts before landing on the vision of an inscribed monument with a flame at the top. The inscription would be an original poem in both English and Spanish, in order to reach as many people in the community as possible.

Thus began the journey to bring the Reflection Garden and Monument to life, an endeavor designed to honor the countless lives touched by Kaweah Health caregivers over the medical center's 61-year history.

LIFE  
FROM FIRST  
SPARK,  
THROUGH  
WISP OF  
INNOCENCE,  
AND THE  
DANCING  
BLAZE OF  
YOUTH,  
IN WISDOM  
WROUGHT OF  
PASSING YEARS  
WE WILL  
CELEBRATE  
THE RADIANCE  
OF THIS FLAME.

IN TIMES OF  
STORM, LET US,  
◆ THE DEVOTED ◆  
SHIELD IT FAST  
AGAINST THE GALE,  
DEFY THE DARK  
AND STOKE IT






The project was propelled forward behind the scenes through collaborative efforts from departments across Kaweah Health. Key players including Kaweah Health's marketing, nursing, foundation, and facilities teams were instrumental in the planning, funding, and construction of the space.

The monument, in its entirety, celebrates life and honors all those who strive to protect it. The poem, which lies on the north and south sides of the monument, one side in English, the other in Spanish, is an uplifting message that speaks of life as a flame, born from a spark and burning brightly until its end. The Devoted, as they are referenced in the poem, are the guardians of that flame, through every circumstance.

Crucial financial backing was generously provided by local donors and businesses such as the Shannon Family, California Water Service, and dedicated Kaweah staff. The final result is a sanctuary of peace and contemplation on the Kaweah Health Medical Center campus. The monument and its flame, which lights up from sunset to sunrise each day, stand as a shining symbol of the compassionate spirit that runs throughout the caregivers and support staff at Kaweah Health.

"This Reflection Garden and Monument is intended to serve as a beacon of hope, a source of inspiration, and a testament to the enduring spirit of compassion that defines our organization," said Kaweah Health CEO Gary Herbst during the dedication ceremony on May 21, 2024.

Since its completion, many have gathered to spend time with this lasting tribute to Kaweah Health's caregivers. Kaweah Health is proud to have such a place to reflect and honor those who devote their lives to healing. For our nurses, doctors, staff, and community, it is a small place to pause, reflect, and find solace amidst the daily intensity of their roles in caring for our community. 



If you are interested in purchasing an engraved paving stone for the monument base, scan the QR code or email [Foundation@KaweahHealth.org](mailto:Foundation@KaweahHealth.org)

## LIFE

FROM FIRST SPARK,  
THROUGH WISP OF  
INNOCENCE, AND THE  
DANCING BLAZE OF  
YOUTH, IN WISDOM  
WROUGHT OF PASSING  
YEARS WE WILL  
CELEBRATE  
THE RADIANCE  
OF THIS FLAME.

IN TIMES OF  
STORM, LET US,  
◆ THE DEVOTED ◆  
SHIELD IT FAST AGAINST  
THE GALE, DEFY THE  
DARK AND STROKE IT  
BRIGHT ONCE MORE,  
UNTIL WHEN, AT LAST,  
AN EMBER TAKES FLIGHT  
AMONG THE STARS, LET  
OTHERS ASK WHY. WE  
WILL SPEAK INSTEAD  
OF THE WARMTH IT  
LENT OUR DAYS, AND OF  
THE BRILLIANCE WITH  
WHICH IT LIGHTS  
OUR SKY.

## VIDA

DESDE PRIMERA CHISPA,  
HASTA EL BRILLO DE  
LA INOCENCIA, Y EL  
INCENDIO BAILANTE  
DE LA JUVENTUD, EN LA  
SABIDURÍA FORMADA  
POR EL PASAR DE LOS  
AÑOS CELEBRAREMOS  
EL RESPLANDOR DE ESTA  
LLAMA.

EN TIEMPOS DE  
TORMENTA, DÉJANOS  
◆ LOS FIELES ◆  
PROTEGERLA DEL  
VIENTO FUERTE, RETAR  
LA OSCURIDAD Y  
ATIZARLO LUCIENTE  
UNA VEZ MÁS, HASTA  
CUANDO, POR FIN,  
UNA BRASA TOMA  
VUELO ENTRE LAS  
ESTRELLAS, DEJA QUE  
PREGUNTEN POR QUE.  
LES CONTAREMOS EN  
VEZ DE LA CALIDEZ QUE  
NOS PRESTO LOS DÍAS Y  
DE LA BRILLANTEZ CON  
QUE ILUMINA  
NUESTRO CIELO.







# Multifaceted Fighter

Local fighter Jennah Creason keeps training for the next big fight.

Local star athlete Jennah Creason trains hard at the Lifestyle Fitness Center as she prepares for her professional boxing debut in August 2024.

Jennah “The Gem” Creason is a Visalia native and rising star in the boxing and mixed martial arts worlds who is leaving her mark both nationally and internationally. Since graduating from Redwood High School in 2024, Jennah has been deep in her training routine as she eyes her August 2024 professional boxing debut.

The youngest of seven siblings who all wrestled, Jennah started her journey at the age of four after finding a box full of medals her siblings had won at a Junior Olympics competition. She was inspired and quickly developed a determination to work hard and become a champion at whatever she did. When her father, Larry Creason,

took Jennah to the Visalia Police Activities League when she was 8 years old, she begged her dad to let her box with the boys.

“When your daughter wants to go fight with a bunch of boys, your instinct is to say no,” Larry recalls. “But she has always been so serious about her





Setting her sights on her first professional boxing match, Jennah started working out at Kaweah Health Lifestyle Fitness Center in early 2024 so that she could seriously focus on training.

“My dad wanted me to work out in a safe place where I could go at night and not worry about anything,” Jennah says.

She was laser-focused on her goal and training hard, but heading into the fight, four opponents all dropped out at the last minute, and no replacement could be found.

“It was a big letdown, but it just gives me more time to get even better for the next fight,” she says.




As the next fight approaches, Jennah is heading back to Lifestyle Fitness Center, working hard to stay strong and focused.

goals. She’s been telling since she was little that she was going to be the best in the world.”

By the end of her senior year in high school, Jennah had amassed a long list of championships in wrestling, boxing, jiu-jitsu, and Thai boxing at regional, state, national, and international competitions, and she just missed the age eligibility for the 2024 Olympic boxing team trials.

“I can basically do anything I need to do there,” she says. “I love the indoor track, and the Drop Zone is perfect for strength and balance training.”

Whoever Jennah ends up fighting in her professional boxing debut, they had better be ready — because she definitely will be. 

## Jennah’s Greatest Hits

- 2023 CIF Girls State Wrestling Champion (44-0 record in junior year)
- 2023 International Youth Brandenburg Cup Gold Medal (boxing)
- 2023 USA Boxing High Performance Team Member
- 2022 Ranked #1 in the Nation by USA Boxing
- 2022 USA Martial Arts Hall of Fame Inductee for the “Most Winning Female Competitor of the Decade”
- Three-time USA Boxing National Champion
- Two-time Junior Golden Gloves Champion
- Girls Reno Worlds Wrestling Champion
- Gold medalist at Worlds Jiu-Jitsu World League Championships

If you want to work out like a champion, become a member at Kaweah Health Lifestyle Fitness Center at [TheLifestyleCenter.org/Membership](https://TheLifestyleCenter.org/Membership).





# Stars Among Us

Kaweah Health recognizes outstanding employees.

**F**rom the patient care to administrative and support roles, Kaweah Health team members believe they play a vital role in saving lives and improving the health of our community. Each year during Hospital Week, the Kaweah Health Starlight Awards honor those team members from each division who have been nominated by their peers for being world-class employees. This year's ceremony honored individual team members whose dedication, hard work, and commitment to delivering world-class care have made a profound impact on the lives of patients, the community, and the overall well-being of the organization.

See all of the Starlight Award winners at [KaweahHealth.org/2024Awards](https://KaweahHealth.org/2024Awards).

Kaweah Health also recognizes peer-nominated employees each month for their exceptional performance.

## 2023 Employee of the Month Winners

**January:** [Sabrina Marks](#), Administrative Assistant, Home Health Agency

**February:** [Mark Quesada](#), Graphic Designer, Marketing & Media Relations

**March:** [Wendy Parsons](#), RN, CMSRN, 3 North Night Charge Nurse

**April:** [Erin Miller](#), RN, Medication Safety Specialist

**May:** [Diana Saechao](#), Senior Consultant, Project Management & Consulting Office

**June:** [Yvette Lopez](#), Clinical Lab Scientist, CLS Clinical Laboratory

**July:** [Martie Duyst](#), Clinical Utilization Review Specialist, Case Management

**August:** [Ana Lopez](#), Street Medicine Program Coordinator, GME Administration

**September:** [Michelle Wilson](#), Clinical Informaticist, ISS Clinical Informatics

**October:** [David Marks](#), Simulation Assistant, Lynn Havard Mirviss Education Center

**November:** [Ody DaSilva](#), Medical Staff Coordinator, Medical Staff Services

**December:** [Armando Gonzalez Zambrano](#), Environmental Services





**CONGRATULATIONS  
JULIO SANCHEZ  
KAWEAH HEALTH 2024 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR!**


**J**ulio Sanchez is a registered nurse at Sequoia Regional Cancer Center and has been with Kaweah Health for an incredible 44 years. He started as a teenage orderly and is now a backbone of the cancer center, inspiring his co-workers with his world-class care every day.

Not only is Julio dedicated to providing exceptional patient care, but he's also a constant advocate for improvements

within the department. He's a problem-solver who ensures patients receive timely treatments and keeps educational materials up-to-date.

Outside of Kaweah Health, Julio has been on the board of the local Oncology Nurses Society (ONS) chapter for many years, where he has served as president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and program liaison for the ONS. He is always encouraging new

nurses to join ONS, helping to promote the nursing profession.

"Julio is a role model and ambassador for Kaweah Health," a nominator said. "Patients often thank him for taking care of their loved ones with such kindness and creating a safe space as they navigate their cancer diagnosis." 





# A Sanctuary of Comfort

Rotary Respite House harbors patient families and resident doctors in need.

▲ Visalia Rotary Foundation members work to support community projects, providing millions in funding for community aid.

Front, L-R: Anees Akhund, Francie Langley, Deborah Volosin | Back, L-R: Jeff Moyer, Cheri Barnes, Gary Simmons, Eric Shannon, Tom Hornburg, Donn Ritter, Shirle Reynolds, Dru Quesnoy

**T**he Rotary Respite House is a joint endeavor born from a vision of compassion and community support. Established in 2016, this unique sanctuary was born out of an understanding of the challenges faced by families from out of the area with hospitalized loved ones. To meet this challenge, the Visalia Rotary Community Foundation joined forces with Kaweah Health to provide a comfortable and affordable lodging option for those in need.

The Visalia Rotary Community Foundation was formed in 1992 and is composed of four local Rotary chapters, all of which contribute funding to the foundation. Since inception, the foundation has given close to \$4 million in community aid through various initiatives. Eric Shannon, the foundation's executive director of long-term fundraising/planned giving, recalls the inspiration behind the Respite House.

"There was a smaller respite house operated by a local church, and it was always busy," he says. "We saw it as an opportunity to make a difference and help those families with loved ones at the hospital."

The house has two adjoining residences: Al's Place and Sharon's Place, named after Rotarian Al Fisher and Eric

— “

***It's one of the things that makes Visalia unique — the people who live here step up and get involved.***

” —

— Eric Shannon on the impact of local donors

Shannon's mother, Sharon Shannon. Since opening in 2016, these fully-furnished units have assisted more than 500 families. Eric is proud of how the Visalia community members come together to support projects like the Respite House.

"It's one of the things that makes Visalia unique — the people who live here step up and get involved," he says. "We raised more than \$500,000 to build the Respite House, and that was all donated by Rotarians and other local donors."

The Respite House also supports new resident doctors in Kaweah Health's Graduate Medical Education program by providing short-term housing. This helps ease the stress of relocation and allows residents to focus on their studies and work while settling into their new roles.

As families continue to find solace at the Respite House, its impact ripples through the community, fostering healing, recovery, and a sense of compassion and support during challenging times. Kaweah Health is so appreciative of the support the Visalia Rotary Community Foundation has provided to its patients and their families. **KH**

Learn more about the Respite House at **[KaweahHealth.org/RespiteHouse](https://KaweahHealth.org/RespiteHouse)**.



# Delivering Care Where It's Needed

Valley native Dr. Carlos Rangel is committed to rural health care.



**F**rom humble beginnings in Tulare, Carlos Rangel Barrera, MD is today an OB/GYN doctor, serving the communities of Exeter and Lindsay at Kaweah Health's rural health clinics. The term OB/GYN stands for obstetrician/gynecologist, which is a medical doctor who combines two disciplines: obstetrics and gynecology. Gynecology is the care of a woman's reproductive organs and health, while obstetrics involves the treatment of pregnant women, including the delivery of babies.

Dr. Rangel was born at Kaweah Health Medical Center in 1984. His parents emigrated from Mexico and settled in Tulare County. They always dreamed he would be a doctor one day.

During his childhood, he developed a strong desire to help others in his community. He studied hard throughout high school, was accepted to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and later attended Harvard Medical School. After finishing at Harvard, Dr. Rangel began a four-year residency at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center.

"It was really amazing that all of my dreams, and my parents' dreams for so many years had finally come true," he says.

After completing his residency, Dr. Rangel began practicing medicine as an OB/GYN in Southern California, but he missed his home community in Tulare County. Growing up, he had seen the desperate need for medical services in the Central Valley, so he decided to come back and serve those people with whom he shared so much history.

Today, Dr. Rangel is married with a child of his own and has grown to appreciate all of his hard work on a deeper level.

"I've come a long way and traveled across the country on this journey," he says. "But to be back here again, close to my family, and now with a family of my own, is very special."

As a caregiver, Dr. Rangel is truly focused on his patients' wellbeing.

"I want my patients to have the best experience as I care for their medical

needs," he says. "I want to help them create happy memories with their little ones."

But his other mission is aimed at the young people of his community, whose lives and concerns he is well aware of.

"Most of all, I aim to inspire the youth in Tulare County to be the future doctors who will serve their community," he says.

Dr. Rangel is thrilled to care for the women in our community and ensure they're well-taken care of before, during, and after their pregnancies. Having returned to his roots, Dr. Rangel is proud to serve Tulare County and give back to the community that helped him succeed. **KH**



Scan the code to watch a video about Dr. Rangel's journey.

Learn more about Kaweah Health clinics at **[KawahHealth.org/Clinics](https://www.kawahhealth.org/Clinics)**.



# Everyday Community Supports

## The Kaweah Health Hospital Guild's Enduring Mission

Kaweah Health Hospital Guild member Carolyn Aiello works at one of the many fundraising events supporting Kaweah Health each year.

In 1956, a group of compassionate individuals came together in Visalia with a shared vision — to support and uplift the local Kaweah Delta Hospital. Those efforts gave birth to an enduring legacy now known as the Kaweah Health Hospital Guild. Over the decades, this guild has grown into an important partner of Kaweah Health.

The dedication and commitment of the guild's founders continue to inspire today's members, leading them to serve in various capacities within Kaweah Health. The men and women of the guild help tremendously in improving the overall patient experience by volunteering in places such as the welcome desk, discharge services, hemodialysis unit, and neonatal intensive care unit.

One longtime initiative of the guild is their Pillow Pals program. Guild members contribute both their time and financial support for the Pillow Pals program, which creates comforting items for patients, bringing a touch of warmth

to their hospital stay. The guild has made many items such as crocheted blankets for babies in need, children's gifts such as stuffed teddy bears to comfort small children in the emergency room, and comfort items such as lap robes and pillows for patients at Sequoia Regional Cancer Center.

Over the years, the guild has donated millions of dollars in the form of volunteer service hours and patient care equipment. Guild member and former president Sandi Kramer encourages everyone to join the guild in helping give back.

"We welcome everyone, from experienced volunteers to those just starting," she says. "Everyone has a skill they can contribute, and together, we can make a bigger impact."

In addition to their volunteer work, they also assist with activities such as the Kaweah Health Foundation golf tournament, employee recruitment fairs, and other events throughout the year.

***Everyone has a skill they can contribute, and together, we can make a bigger impact.***

— Guild President  
Sandi Kramer

Becoming a part of the Kaweah Health Hospital Guild is a simple way to help support your community and make a difference to those in need of comfort. You can join the guild for just \$15 a year and four hours per month of your time.

KH

Learn more about becoming a guild member at [KaweahHealth.org/Guild](https://KaweahHealth.org/Guild).



# Excellence in Patient Satisfaction



**K**aweah Health Dialysis Center has received a five-star patient-satisfaction rating and a four-star quality rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the highest ratings for any dialysis clinic in Visalia.

## Centers For Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)

### PATIENT SURVEY RATING



### STAR QUALITY RATING



## Why 5 Stars?

- Hospital beds and recliners
- Warm blankets
- Outstanding nurse to patient ratio
- Blood transfusions
- IDPN (intradialytic parenteral nutrition)
- Hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis
- Preemptive kidney transplantation evaluation
- Guidance through the process of kidney transplant
- Extended hours



**VISIT:** [KaweahHealth.org/Dialysis](http://KaweahHealth.org/Dialysis)



# Hero of Heroes

Doctor and nurse are honored with Stroke Program's award for exemplary work.



▲ Hero of Heroes award winners Richard Pantera, MD and Alice Goodin, RN

## Stroke Program Hero of Heroes Award

In recognition of exceptional performance and outstanding contributions to stroke patient care, the Kaweah Health medical staff are honored with the Stroke Program Hero of Heroes award.

A stroke is a medical emergency that occurs when blood flow to part of the brain is stopped, and it is the fifth-leading cause of death in the nation. Every 40 seconds, someone in the United States has a stroke, and every four minutes one person will die from a stroke.

Kaweah Health is committed to providing the best care possible for our patients who have had a stroke or TIA (transient ischemic attack). According to Healthgrades Clinical Quality Reports, Kaweah Health's stroke death rate has exceeded expectations as compared to

other hospitals throughout the nation. With this commitment, Kaweah Health has obtained the Joint Commission's Primary Stroke Certification. By pursuing this certification, Kaweah Health has reduced the variation in clinical processes with regards to stroke management, thus improving the quality of patient care and increasing community education on stroke prevention.

## Physician Award

**Richard Pantera, MD** is being recognized for his leadership and dedication in caring for our stroke patient population. Dr. Pantera has dedicated countless hours teaching Kaweah Health residents and championed many research activities. The Stroke Hero of Heroes recognition is presented to providers who have achieved exemplary contributions and outstanding performance in the treatment of stroke.

## Staff Member Award

**Alice Goodin, RN** is being recognized as a Stroke Hero for her dedication and compassion for our stroke patients in the Emergency Department. Alice is a strong stroke patient advocate, ensuring Kaweah Health is consistently providing evidence-based care. The Stroke Hero of Heroes recognition is presented to staff who have demonstrated exceptional dedication and made significant contributions in the care of our stroke patients. **KH**



## Congratulations Dr. Pantera and Alice!



Learn more about Kaweah Health's Stroke program at **[KaweahHealth.org/Stroke](https://KaweahHealth.org/Stroke)**.



# Do I need to go to the emergency room?

Emergency Room	Urgent Care	Primary Care
Difficulty breathing chest, arm, or jaw pain	Cold, flu, or COVID symptoms	Less urgent medical problems
Severe burn or electric shock	Ear or eye infections	Routine check-ups
Seizures or head injuries with confusion or fainting	Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea	
Deep wounds with heavy or uncontrolled bleeding	Minor cuts or burns	
Severe allergic reactions	Sprains, strains, or broken bones	
Possible poisoning	Rashes, animal bites, or insect stings	
Severe abdominal pain associated with chest trauma, pain, or pressure		



# Kaweah Health brings more to the table.

Accepting new patients.  
Most commercial insurance plans accepted.



Board-certified orthopedic surgeon Jun Kim, and ROSA® Knee robotic technology.



## Dr. Jun Kim specializes in primary and revision hip and knee replacement surgery.

He is specially trained in ROSA knee robotic technology, and takes a patient-centered approach to return you to an active, pain-free lifestyle. Kaweah Health has the only facility in the South Valley equipped with ROSA robot technology.

If knee or hip pain is keeping you from living your best life, schedule a consultation with Dr. Kim today.

## Dr. Kim's clinical interests and expertise:

- Hip Replacement
- Fracture Management
- Knee Replacement
- Hip and Knee Arthritis
- Robotic Total Knee Replacement
- Revision Hip and Knee Replacement
- Avascular Necrosis (Hip and Knee)



**Kaweah Health  
Medical Clinic**

**WILLOW AVENUE**

202 W. Willow Ave., Suite 502 (5th Floor)  
Visalia, CA 93291

**VISIT:** [KaweahHealth.org/MedicalClinic](http://KaweahHealth.org/MedicalClinic)

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**For patients: (559) 624-4820 • For doctors: EFax (559) 624-6590**