

# Vital Signs

## Back in the Saddle

A Cowboy Girl shares a life-saving lesson.





# Vital Signs

**Vital Signs**  
is a publication of  
Kaweah Health.

**Director of Marketing  
& Media Relations**  
Karen Cocagne

**Marketing & Media  
Relations Staff**  
Greg Bitney  
Jaclyn Bunting  
David Celaya  
Cheryl Johnson  
Amee Longbottom  
Mark Quesada  
Gary Rogers  
Samantha N. Torres

**Share your success  
story with us!**  
Kaweah Health and the  
community we serve  
would love to hear  
your story. Contact  
us at **Marketstaff@  
KaweahHealth.org**  
or call (559) 624-2463.



## 04 Three Decades Strong

Kaweah Health  
Rehabilitation Hospital  
celebrates 30 years of  
helping patients.

## 10 Making Waves

Instructor is creating  
strength and freedom  
with every movement.

## 19 Expanding Care in Woodlake

New clinic offers more  
care in the community.

## 06 Women’s Care Transformed

Three female specialists  
encourage women to  
care for their health.

## 12 Back in the Saddle

A Cowboy Girl shares  
a life-saving lesson.

## 20 2025 Starlight Awards

Kaweah Health celebrates  
its star employees.

## 08 Leading Physicians

Dr. Julianne Randolph is  
excited for her new role as  
Kaweah Health Medical  
Chief of Staff.

## 15 A Heartwarming Experience

Teacher and student  
reunite for life-saving  
heart procedure.

## 23 Pelvic Power Matters

Taking care of your  
core is important.

### LETTER FROM THE CEO

As we continue our mission to bring compassionate, high-quality care closer to home, Kaweah Health is pleased to share several exciting developments that reflect our growing commitment to the people of Tulare County.

One of the most impactful additions to our team is Dr. Walter Gribben, a board-certified pulmonologist now serving patients at our 202 W. Willow Ave. location and across our rural health clinics. His arrival enhances access to specialty care, particularly in underserved areas, and supports the growth of Kaweah Health’s comprehensive pulmonary rehabilitation programs.

In line with our goal to improve patient convenience, we’ve made enhancements to our laboratory services. Kaweah Health Laboratory Patient Service Centers now offer appointment scheduling through the organization’s website. Patients can book appointments in advance, check wait times, and complete registration online—streamlining the process and improving overall access to care.

As we invest in innovation and infrastructure, we’re equally invested in cultivating the healthcare professionals of tomorrow. Kaweah Health’s Career Technical Education program continues to grow with the addition of Porterville High School to its list of participating schools. Students gain hands-on experience in hospital departments, learning essential skills and exploring meaningful careers in health care. This initiative supports workforce development and strengthens community ties to the medical profession.

Our pledge to deliver exceptional patient care is also demonstrated in the continued recognition of our specialty centers. The Kaweah Health Dialysis Center has maintained its five-star rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for patient satisfaction. This rating is based on direct patient feedback about physician communication, staff interactions, educational support, and the overall comfort and cleanliness of the facility. It reflects the consistent quality and compassionate care provided to dialysis patients in our community.

To meet growing demand in our rural communities, we’ve also expanded our presence in Woodlake. Kaweah Health recently opened its second clinic in the area—the Valencia Clinic—which focuses on primary care services. The original clinic continues to serve pediatric patients. Together, these locations ensure patients can receive continuous, high-quality medical attention close to home.

These developments reflect Kaweah Health’s continued focus on expanding access, enhancing care, and investing in the future of community health. We maintain our steadfast resolve to meeting the needs of our patients and growing alongside the communities we serve. Thank you for choosing Kaweah Health.



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

### KAWEAH HEALTH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Zone 1  
**Mike Olmos**  
President
- Zone 2  
**Lynn Havard Mirviss, RN, EdD**  
Vice President
- Zone 3  
**Dean Levitan, MD**  
Board Member
- Zone 4  
**David Francis**  
Secretary/Treasurer
- Zone 5  
**Armando Murrieta**  
Board Member

**ON THE COVER**  
Kidney transplant recipient  
Jennifer Nicholson is back to  
roping and riding.



# Three Decades Strong

Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital celebrates 30 years of helping patients.

Physical therapist Tara Norman, therapy supervisor, and volunteer Greg White demonstrate the SafeGait360 Mobility Trainer at the facility's 30 year celebration and open house.

At right, top to bottom, Rehabilitation Services Director Molly Neiderreiter delivers remarks, attendees won thank you gifts in a raffle.

Kaweah Health celebrated its Rehabilitation Hospital's 30th anniversary with an Open House on April 10. From its humble beginnings with just 14 beds, the Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital has expanded to include 61 beds.

There are currently 45 licensed beds for mobility and self-care rehabilitation and 16 skilled nursing beds. The hospital provides comprehensive cardiac rehab services and also

contains a wound center. In addition to the rehab hospital, Kaweah Health's rehabilitation program also includes a 32-bed subacute hospital and six outpatient rehabilitation clinics throughout the region.

"Rehabilitation is one of Kaweah Health's pillars of excellence," says Jag Batth, Kaweah Health chief operating officer, who began his career in acute rehabilitation. "Our outcomes are among the best in the nation."

Those outcomes reflect Kaweah Health's dedication to ensuring patients not only receive life-saving care but also return to living their lives as independently as possible. Kaweah Health's rehabilitation program features:

- The only comprehensive cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation program in the South Valley

- The only adult rehabilitation program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in the South Valley
- The first CARF-accredited amputation specialty program in the Central Valley
- The only CARF-accredited stroke program in Tulare and Kings counties

Tulare County Supervisor Amy Shuklian, who worked at the Rehabilitation Hospital for 17 years, encourages friends, family members,

and others who need rehabilitation to seek treatment at Kaweah Health.

"At Kaweah Health rehab, you are going to get some of the best care in the Central Valley," Shuklian says.

She added that the staff makes the Rehabilitation Hospital exceptional.

"Their compassion for their patients and their desire to see their patients succeed is what makes this place so special," Shuklian says.

Former patient John Martin, who needed rehab after a broken leg, echoed those sentiments.

"I love the people at Kaweah Health rehab. They really helped me, worked with me, and encouraged me when I was afraid of falling," Martin says.

Former patients even come back to help current patients through Kaweah Health's Peer Support program. Peer Support volunteers have been through the physical and occupational therapy program and they share an understanding and genuine respect for current patients' health challenges and concerns. They offer guidance and encouragement based on their own experiences to help patients reach their full potential.

Six of these volunteers were honored at the event: Jeff Bottoms, Sandra Costa, Doug Henderson, Mark Saltzman, Jim Taylor, and Mark Wilson.

Kaweah Health's Rehabilitation Hospital opened in May 1994 and continues to offer the most advanced physical, occupational and speech therapy equipment available, including the longest SafeGait360™ track in the nation, a newly added outdoor mobility training course, a Bioness Integrated Therapy System to address visual and cognitive deficits, and a fiber optic endoscope for the evaluation of swallow. **KH**

For more information on Kaweah Health's rehabilitation services, visit [KawahHealth.org/Rehab](https://www.kawahhealth.org/Rehab).

## Cutting Edge Technology

The SafeGait 360™ Balance and Mobility Trainer is an overhead dynamic body-weight support and fall protection system that promotes patient confidence, facilitates faster recovery, and improves safety for both the patient and the therapy staff.

The physical and occupational therapy staff at Kaweah Health Rehabilitation utilize the SafeGait 360™ to provide dynamic gait and mobility training to a variety of patients' diagnoses including stroke, incomplete spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, and many more.







**Dr. Shelly Bansal**  
Cardiothoracic Surgeon



**Dr. Harleen Chahil**  
Interventional Cardiologist



**Dr. Holly Quinn**  
Obstetrician and Gynecologist

# Women's Care Transformed

Three female specialists encourage women to care for their health.

**F**or women seeking healthcare at Kaweah Health, the addition of three new physician specialists means more than expanded medical services — it represents a transformation in how patients can connect with doctors who understand their experiences firsthand.

With the arrival of Holly Quinn, MD in obstetrics and gynecology, Harleen Chahil, MD in interventional cardiology, and Shelly Bansal, MD in cardiothoracic surgery, Kaweah Health is not just filling critical roles, local women now have more options to find physicians who may relate to

their concerns, questions, and health journeys in a more personal way.

Dr. Quinn has a 1-year-old son and her own childbirth experience, an emergency C-section, helps her relate to her patients more.

"I got to be in the hot seat," Dr. Quinn says. "I had faith in the team, but it was very surreal. I have a whole lot more empathy for my patients."

She also finds that she can connect with her patients more once their babies are born, relating to all the baby development milestones they talk about when coming in for the post-partum appointments.

"Going through this process — which can be the most exciting but also anxiety ridden — and getting to see moms walk out of the hospital healthy and with their babies is so rewarding," Dr. Quinn says. "Then I get to see them for their second baby."

For women in the community, the ability to see a female interventional cardiologist is unique. Less than 5 percent of interventional cardiologists in the United States are female, and Dr. Chahil uses that to her advantage.

"Finding that connection with my female patients is so important," Dr. Chahil says. "There are the physical

symptoms, of course, but there are also mind-body responses. And having a woman be comfortable with me and be able to express those is so beneficial."

When it comes to heart disease, the leading cause of death in women, Dr. Chahil focuses on the prevention side. She says women who had gestational diabetes or high blood pressure when they were pregnant should pay attention to their heart health as those are signs they could be at risk for heart disease later in life.

"Women tend to be the caretakers and take care of everyone else but ignore their own symptoms," Dr. Chahil says. "I encourage women to talk with their primary doctors and ask about their heart health."

Dr. Bansal, one of the few women in cardiothoracic surgery — a field where only 8 percent of surgeons are female — agrees that women don't spend enough time thinking about their own health. As a woman she understands where her patients are coming from and how they think.

"Women make lots of excuses of why they feel poorly," Dr. Bansal says. "Women wait longer

and they put things off because they are busy caring for everyone else."

But that waiting is causing them problems.

"Women tend to come in sicker and with more severe heart disease because they wait," she says.

Her advice is don't wait and ignore symptoms — early diagnosis and treatment are key.

"Women have some of the same bad habits men do, so it makes sense that they are both susceptible to heart disease," Dr. Bansal says. "Even with a greater burden of disease, women have the same great results from heart surgery that men do."

All three recommend women visit their primary doctor annually so little issues don't turn into big issues. <sup>KH</sup>

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Quinn or one of our other OB-GYNs please call (559) 624-4820.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Chahil please call (559) 624-6520.

— “  
**Women tend to be the caretakers and take care of everyone else but ignore their own symptoms.**”  
—

— Dr. Harleen Chahil

## No More Waiting!

**Kaweah Health Lab Services now offers:**

- Online appointments
- Booking up to four weeks in advance
- Pre-registration when you book online
- Real-time tracking of wait times



**We have four convenient locations!**

For hours, addresses, and to schedule your blood draw, just visit [KaweahHealth.org/LabServices](https://KaweahHealth.org/LabServices)



**Kaweah Health Lab Services**

[KaweahHealth.org/LabServices](https://KaweahHealth.org/LabServices)





# Leading Physicians

Dr. Julianne Randolph is excited for her new role as Kaweah Health Medical Chief of Staff.

**W**ith a career built on the promise of treating each child as if they were her very own, Julianne Randolph, DO, is now extending her compassionate approach to healthcare leadership at Kaweah Health. The board-certified pediatrician brings both her medical expertise and administrative experience to her new position as chief of staff, which oversees medical staff, beginning July 1, 2025.

“Sometimes, doctors can get isolated in their specialties, but this has been a great opportunity to see all of the connections our work has to services and staff across the whole system,” reflects Dr. Randolph on her journey through hospital leadership. “I’m truly excited to serve our medical community in this capacity.”

This transition builds on Dr. Randolph’s involvement with the hospital since 2016, when she joined the Kaweah Health Medical Executive Committee as Pediatrics Department Chair. From 2017 to 2024, she served as the Pediatrics Medical Director at Kaweah Health, guiding the Pediatrics Unit and working as a hospitalist with Valley Children’s Medical Group. This combination of clinical care and administrative oversight has prepared her for a role that encompasses the entire medical staff.

The position of chief of staff is particularly important in California’s healthcare system, where doctors cannot be directly employed by hospitals. The Medical Executive

Committee, which Dr. Randolph will lead, provides governance for physicians, focusing on quality improvement, peer review, and patient outcomes. Her two-year term will position her as a connection between doctors, hospital executives, and the board of directors.

“It might sound simple, but better communications between teams builds trust, which ultimately leads to better care,” says Randolph, highlighting what appears to be a central theme of her leadership approach. This straightforward perspective reflects her years in pediatric practice, where clear communication with both young patients and their parents is essential.

Dr. Randolph’s selection for this role followed Kaweah Health’s established process, with former chiefs of staff serving as a nominating committee. They selected her from the medical executive committee before putting the nomination to a vote among the entire medical staff.

As she prepares to take on this new challenge while maintaining her connection to pediatric care, Dr. Randolph represents the balance between clinical expertise and organizational leadership. For the Visalia community and Kaweah Health patients, this means having an advocate who understands both patient care and the systems that support it.

“I’m looking forward to leading our medical community over the next two years,” Dr. Randolph says. “We have a strong group of talented, experienced, and committed physicians here, and it’s humbling to serve as their chief.” [KH](#)



▲ Clockwise from top left, Ronald McDonald in front of Kaweah Health Medical Center (photo courtesy of Ron Holman/Visalia Times-Delta). The iconic clown visited the hospital as a thank you for Kaweah Health’s support of Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Central Valley. Ronald with Interim Chief Nursing Officer Schlene Peet, Ronald with Rhonda Quinones, director of Maternal Child Health, and Ronald with Julia Wittman, care coordination specialist, left, and Melanie Sibbu, RN, case manager, right.

## Spreading Cheer

Iconic Clown Brings Cheer to Kaweah Health.

**R**onald McDonald himself stopped by Kaweah Health Hospital in May to spread a little cheer.

Ronald visited patients and family members in the hospital lobby before going to the pediatric wing to bring smiles to some of the youngest patients. He finished with a trip down to the lab to visit the hardworking staff that processes more than one million lab tests each year.

His visit coincided with the 2nd Annual FORE the House Golf Tournament: Visalia, hosted by Ronald McDonald

Charities of the Central Valley and sponsored in part by Kaweah Health. Valley Children’s Medical Group and Kaweah Health have a partnership that provides excellent pediatric care in Visalia, but there are times when a child must be moved to Valley Children’s Hospital in Madera. In that case, families can take advantage of the Ronald McDonald House there, which houses families with children in the hospital. Annually, about 20 percent of visitors to the Madera house come from Tulare County.

“When our youngest and most vulnerable residents must leave for specialty care not available here, it’s a relief to have such a strong community partner like Ronald McDonald House Charities,” said Marc Mertz, chief strategy officer for Kaweah Health. “Their support ensures that when our community members need to travel for their children’s health, they have a home away from home.” [KH](#)

— “  
*It might sound simple, but better communications between teams builds trust, which ultimately leads to better care.*  
” —

— Dr. Julianne Randolph





# Making Waves

Instructor is creating strength and freedom with every movement.

Soozee Edminster has been helping people of all abilities learn to swim for more than 25 years.

For more than 25 years, Soozee Edminster has helped shape Kaweah Health Lifestyle Fitness Center into a welcoming space where people of all ages come to move, reset, and connect.

Her journey began in Tulare, where she joined the Tulare Sharks swim team at 9-years-old. By high school, she was already teaching swim lessons at Red Cross and what started as a summer job grew into a lifelong calling. Over the years, Soozee also taught dance, including a 25-year stint at The Creative Center in Visalia, working with developmentally disabled adults. That blend of movement and compassion led her to aquatics, where she found her stride at the Lifestyle Fitness Center.

As a lifelong swimmer, coach, and former dance instructor, Soozee brings rhythm and energy to every class.

“I love to choreograph the stuff I do in the water,” she says. “I play music, and it’s almost like karaoke in there. People want to sing, and it’s just really fun.”

She teaches a variety of aquatic classes including warm water aqua-fit, deep water interval, and specialized aquatics — all designed to meet people where they are. “You can do any level,” she says. “Nobody knows what you’re doing because you’re in the water — and it’s up to you.”

That freedom creates a supportive environment for people recovering from surgery, managing chronic pain, or easing back into movement.

For many, the water provides more than physical relief.

“Some people come in because they’re caregivers or have a lot of stress,” she adds. “They come to class to sing, move, and escape for a while.”

Soozee has experienced these benefits herself. Teaching and swimming nearly every day has kept her strong and active. She’s seen similar growth in her clients.

“I’ve had people with arthritis or recovering from surgery who regain strength and mobility. The deeper

the water, the more resistance you get,” she says. “Swimming in general is great for circulation. It helps with blood pressure, joint pain, recovery, and more.”

Her classes are as much about community as they are about fitness, with students coming early or staying after classes just to talk. Many of her students have gone on to earn scholarships, coach, or even reach the Olympic trials. But Soozee values every small success.

“You can do things in the water you did when you were little and can’t do on land anymore — somersaults, backflips. Just have fun,” she says. “You start slow, build up, and before you know it, you’re doing more than you thought you could.” KH

For information on the Lifestyle Fitness Center’s Learn to Swim Classes and Summer Membership Special visit [TheLifestyleCenter.org](http://TheLifestyleCenter.org).

## Health Decades

Stage-of-Life wellness tips for women



### 20s & 30s

- Get active and stay active
- Don't smoke or misuse alcohol or drugs
- Use sunblock to protect your skin
- Keep your yearly doctor and gynecologist visits
- Eat healthy foods including dark green, leafy vegetables which have folic acid



### 40s (critical decade)

- Visit your doctor regularly to check for heart disease risks and diabetes
- Get a mammogram
- Have skin cancer screenings
- Schedule a colonoscopy at age 45
- Continue yearly visits to your gynecologist for help with perimenopause
- Eat foods with fiber and antioxidants
- Reduce alcohol, sugar, and refined carbs



### 50s

- Work with your doctor to handle menopause changes
- Maintain a healthy weight to prevent diabetes and heart disease
- Keep moving regularly to protect muscles and bones
- Eat lots of vegetables and fatty fish for omega-3 fatty acids
- Cut down on salt



### 60s+

- See your doctor regularly for disease screenings
- Continue gynecologist appointments
- Talk openly with your doctor about sexual and bladder health
- Add more fiber to your diet and get all needed nutrients
- Keep your body active, especially by walking
- Exercise your brain and stay connected with family and friends



f | y | x | i VISIT: [KaweahHealth.org](http://KaweahHealth.org)



# Back in the Saddle

A Cowboy Girl shares a life-saving lesson.



**A**s a woman who can jump on and off horses running at full speed, Jennifer Nicholson knows how to work through the pain.

When the internationally known trick rider and executive director of Riata Ranch in Three Rivers started not feeling well at the beginning of the summer of 2023, she thought she must have a 24-hour bug. When that feeling continued to come and go throughout the summer, the 61-year-old blamed it on getting older. Finally, in the fall she went to her doctor to say that something wasn't right.

"I'm here to tell you that if you are experiencing a symptom, or something that feels different, please just go get it checked out," Nicholson says. "It could be nothing, but it could be something."

For Nicholson, it was something. She had chronic fatigue by December 2023, and her primary care doctor sent her to Kaweah Health nephrologist Tariq Javed, MD, a doctor who specializes in kidney diseases. Nicholson's kidneys were only operating at 8 percent and

Jennifer Nicholson, executive director of Riata Ranch known for the Cowboy Girls trick riders, is back to riding after kidney failure put her on the couch for more than a year.

Kaweah Health Dr. Tariq Javed got her on the right path to receive a transplant.

she was in stage 5 renal failure, so Dr. Javed sent her straight to the hospital.

"I had no pain, no swelling. I saw no change," she says. "Dr. Javed didn't understand how I was able to do everything I was still doing."

Dr. Javed agreed that it was unusual that she was able to be so active, but he added that kidney disease can sneak up on you.

"Kidney disease is a slow disease," he says. "Slowly people have symptoms, like fatigue or no appetite, that can be dismissed as related to

age. A lot of times people wait until they really aren't doing well before they come to me."

Dr. Javed says it is important to see a primary physician when not feeling well so they can check everything. Those with diabetes and high blood pressure have an increased risk of kidney failure, he says.

Nicholson started dialysis at Kaweah Health Dialysis Center right away after being released from the hospital. Fortunately, she was a candidate for home peritoneal dialysis. With peritoneal dialysis, the patient has a fluid pumped into their abdomen that removes waste and chemicals.

"All I knew was I wanted to get back to my life, I wanted off dialysis," Nicholson says. "Dialysis is not a cure, it is only a treatment."

With the help of the staff at the Dialysis Center, Nicholson got on the transplant list at the University of California, Davis.

Although Nicholson had several friends who were willing to give her a kidney, it is very hard to make it through the screening process. But there was one candidate who made it through, her big brother Mark Welch.

"I had surgery on my shoulder the same time she had her first surgery, so I wasn't able to volunteer right away," Welch, 63, says.

After a few friends had failed, Welch was concerned he might not pass all the screenings.

"They told me if there is something wrong with you, we will find it," he says.

However, he passed with flying colors. After being diagnosed in January 2024, Nicholson had her kidney transplant 10 months later at the end of November 2024.

"It was an easy decision to be her donor," Welch says. "It just made sense."

Welch recovered easily from his surgery, but as the recipient it took Nicholson a while longer to get back on her feet. She suffered a few complications and ended up staying at the UC Davis hospital for



Dr. Tariq Javed says it is important to make sure your primary physician checks everything when you are not feeling well. He adds that those with diabetes and high blood pressure have an increased risk of kidney failure.

— “  
***I'm here to tell you that if you are experiencing a symptom, or something that feels different, please just go get it checked out.***  
” —

— Jennifer Nicholson, kidney transplant recipient.





30 days. However, since the surgery she has had no signs of rejection or infection.

“I was jealous when he got released from the hospital and I was still there,” Nicholson says.

Welch may have rubbed it in a little bit.

“I would go by her room and say: ‘hey sis I’m dancing,’” he says. “But now she is back to normal, annoyingly normal.”

After the transplant, Nicholson says she feels so much better it makes her realize how bad she really felt, for probably a long time, before she acted.

“Everyone asks ‘didn’t you not feel well?’” Nicholson says. “I just powered through. I had the attitude just give me a pill and I will be fine.”

Her perspective has changed. Now anytime she feels something, she goes right to her doctor.

“I don’t ever want to go through this again,” she says.

But more than that, she also appreciates so much more the things she can do. During that year of having



to watch things happening on her ranch while she was bound to her bed or her couch, there were times when she would just be angry that her body wouldn’t let her participate.

▲ Jennifer and her brother, Mark Welch. Inset, a photo of Jennifer and Mark from an Easter when they were kids and he found all the eggs. “I got even, I now have one of his kidneys,” she says.

▲ Jennifer on her horse, Melody.

“You earn your reputation in the arena, but you earn your respect in the barn,” she says. “That’s my motto. And I couldn’t do anything.”

Nicholson is back in the saddle again, doing a few lasso tricks and training students. She is grateful for her friends, her medical team at both Kaweah Health and UC Davis, and her brother.

“I’m so lucky to have him. He did not hesitate,” she says. KH

# A Heartwarming Experience

## Teacher and student reunite for life saving heart procedure.

▶ Sheri Powers, left, talks with former student and current doctor, Dr. H. Kiran Reddy, outside his Visalia office.

For 25 years, Sheri Powers was a teacher in Visalia and Hanford and worked at Hanford West High School as part of the health and education career pathway — classes designed to give students a head start on high-demand careers in healthcare and public service. Sheri never expected that one of her former students would one day play a central role in her own healthcare journey.

After a visit to her primary doctor in 2024, Sheri began experiencing heart palpitations — an uneasy, fluttering sensation in her chest — and was referred to Dr. Hanumandla Raj Reddy, a respected Hanford cardiologist with more than 34 years of experience.

On a follow-up visit to Dr. Reddy’s office, Sheri noticed a familiar face walking down the hall — her former student, H. Kiran Reddy. She had seen his name on the sign and knew he worked there as a doctor, but it was still a pleasant surprise when they recognized each other. “It was a heartwarming experience,” Sheri recalls. “I was covering for my dad that day, and had the good fortune of running into Sheri,” said Dr. H. Kiran Reddy. “It’s really special to have things come full circle and be able to care for her.”

Following her consultation, Sheri underwent testing and imaging, which led to a scheduled angiogram — an X-ray test that allows doctors to examine blood flow and detect any blockages in the arteries. During the procedure, Dr. H. Kiran Reddy discovered a serious blockage and immediately placed a medical

device called a stent in Sheri’s artery. The stent expanded the vessel and restored healthy blood flow.

Sheri’s procedure was performed at the Kaweah Health Medical Center, where more than 1,000 stents are placed every year by physicians across Tulare and Kings Counties. The hospital’s advanced technology and skilled surgical teams ensure doctors have what they need to provide patients with excellent cardiac care.

“The cardiac care team at Kaweah Health Medical Center is outstanding. From prep to procedure to recovery, the staff provides exceptional care at every step. The cath lab team responds effectively and appropriately to all situations, and the recovery nurses ensure patients understand their procedure and have all their questions answered. I’m fortunate to work with such a comprehensive team that allows patients like Sheri to receive excellent cardiac care.”

Today, just a few months after her procedure, Sheri is back to feeling like herself again—and her follow-up tests show a clean bill of health.

Learn more about common heart procedures at [KaweahHealth.org/HeartCare](https://KaweahHealth.org/HeartCare). KH

— “  
**The cardiac care team at Kaweah Health Medical Center is outstanding. From prep to procedure to recovery, the staff provides exceptional care at every step.**  
” —

— Dr. H. Kiran Reddy



# Introducing



**Dr. Shelly Bansal**  
Cardiothoracic Surgeon

Dr. Bansal joined Kaweah Health’s Cardiothoracic Surgery Program as medical director in March, alongside Dr. Mayer who started the open-heart program in 1996. Triple board-certified in critical care, thoracic, and general surgery, she completed medical school at Sint Eustatius and fellowships at Pittsburgh and Ohio State. Her specialties include heart failure management, high-risk coronary artery bypass grafting CABG, atrial fibrillation treatment, mechanical circulatory support, and shock team management.



**Dr. Walter Gribben**  
Pulmonologist

Dr. Gribben joined Kaweah Health in May, focusing on helping patients breathe better. A University of Alabama medical graduate, he completed his residency at Saint Louis University Hospital and a pulmonary/critical care fellowship at UC Irvine. He’s board certified in both critical care medicine and pulmonary disease.



**Dr. Carla Herriford**  
Dermatologist

Dr. Herriford joined Kaweah Health in March, emphasizing personal interaction through examination and attentive listening. Harvard-educated with a biology master’s, she earned her medical degree from Baylor College of Medicine and completed dermatology residency at Martin Luther King/Charles R. Drew Medical Center. She is board certified in dermatology.

## Patient Experience

At Kaweah Health, our Patient Experience Team works every day to make your experience better. From the moment you arrive to the time you leave, we’re dedicated to ensuring you feel heard, valued, and supported. We welcome all feedback, both positive and constructive, and use it to make meaningful improvements. Whether we’re rounding at the bedside to answer questions, resolving concerns, or sharing patient insights with our leadership team, our goal remains the same: to provide compassionate, patient-centered care.

If you’d like to share your experience about the care you or a loved one received at Kaweah Health, please call our Patient Experience Team at (559) 624-5151.



**Deborah Volosin**  
Director of Patient and Community Experience



**Sintayehu Yirgu**  
Patient Experience Advocate



**Teresa Bobadilla**  
Patient Experience Data Analyst



# Tiny Feet, Big Steps

The Kaweah Health Foundation has launched "**Tiny Feet, Big Steps**," a \$3 million campaign to renovate the **Pediatric Unit** and expand the **Surgical Recovery Unit**.

These updates will create more comfortable spaces for our youngest patients and those recovering from short-stay surgeries.

This campaign provides meaningful opportunities to create a lasting legacy for your family or business within our community. With room naming opportunities throughout the renovated units, as well as in our breakrooms and nurses’ stations, your support will be honored for years to come.

**Support our community's healthcare needs by donating today.**

For more information on naming opportunities, or to make a donation, please contact the **Kaweah Health Foundation** at (559) 624-2359.



[KaweahHealth.org/BigSteps](https://KaweahHealth.org/BigSteps)



Join Us in Supporting the Kaweah Health Foundation!



# Stroke Awareness

Learn to spot the warning signs of stroke and you could save a life.

Each May, Kaweah Health observes Stroke Awareness Month, with the goal of reminding people about the warning signs of a stroke. When someone experiences a stroke, every minute counts. The best way to remember these signs is by learning the phrase BE FAST! Stroke is a serious health risk, but fast action can save lives and reduce long-term effects. Remember, a quick response can make all the difference.

Kaweah Health is committed to providing the best care possible for our patients who have had a stroke or TIA (transient ischemic attack). Kaweah Health consistently achieves stroke outcomes that meet or exceed national benchmarks. With this commitment, Kaweah Health has obtained the Joint Commission's Primary Stroke Certification. By achieving certification, Kaweah Health has reduced the variation in

clinical processes thus improving the quality of patient care and increasing community education on stroke prevention. KH



B

E

F

A

S

T

BALANCE

Sudden loss of balance

EYES

Sudden change in vision

FACE

Sudden facial droop

ARM


Sudden arm or leg weakness

SPEECH

Sudden speech difficulty

TIME

to call 911



Their world rests on your shoulders.

Are you at risk for stroke?

Take a free stroke risk assessment test today!



Learn more at [KaweahHealth.org/Stroke](https://KaweahHealth.org/Stroke).

# Expanding Care in Woodlake

New clinic offers more care in the community.

Expanding to meet growing community needs, Kaweah Health has opened a second clinic in Woodlake, expanding much-needed adult primary care services to residents who have outgrown the existing facility. The new Valencia Clinic represents a significant healthcare investment in the rural community, with plans to add specialists in the future while the original location transitions to focus on pediatric care. “Our rural clinics allow us to bridge the gap between distance and care, ensuring patients receive the continuous medical attention they need and deserve,” says Gary Herbst, CEO of Kaweah Health. “From preventative screenings to chronic disease management, these clinics provide essential services that help keep our communities healthy.” Dr. Rocio Medina, a native of Woodlake, says she benefited from those services in her community as a child.

“I went into medicine because I wanted to make a difference. I didn’t realize I would be back to practice at the same clinic I went to as a child,” Dr. Medina says. “It is an honor and a privilege to take care of the community. I hope the community continues to trust us. We are providing the best care possible for everyone.” Woodlake Mayor Rudy Mendoza reminisced about when the only medical care in Woodlake was a mobile trailer in an empty lot. “I have witnessed a lot of change,” Mendoza says. “It is great to see Kaweah Health make this investment in the community.” Supervisor Eddie Valero says Kaweah Health’s presence in the smaller communities is important to the well-being of Tulare County residents. “Kaweah Health has an imprint in every single community I serve,” Valero says. “Their focus is on family, their

focus is on the community, and their focus is on health care.” Initially the clinic will have primary care, however specialists will be added as it continues to grow. Herbst says Kaweah Health’s rural health clinics offer access to affordable care needed in these communities, taking care of people where they are. “These clinics aren’t just healthcare facilities; they are lifelines,” Herbst says. “By offering care close to home, we empower families to take charge of their health, prevent costly emergency visits, and build a healthier future for themselves and their loved ones.” KH Kaweah Health Valencia Clinic is located at 132 S. Valencia Blvd and Kaweah Health Woodlake Clinic is located at 180 E. Antelope Ave. The clinics are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For appointments, call (559) 564-1800.



Kaweah Health Valencia Clinic staff and local dignitaries cut the ribbon at the new clinic on April 3. This second Kaweah Health clinic in Woodlake will focus on adult primary-care services, while the original location will focus on pediatric care.





Every member of the Kaweah Health family contributes in some way to 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 the Starlight Award winners at [KaweahHealth.org/2025Awards](https://KaweahHealth.org/2025Awards).

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

### 2024 Employee of the Month Winners

- January:** [Elli Santana](#), LVN, M/S Renal-4N
- February:** [Carolyn Hainsworth](#), Clinic Business Office Lead, KH Medical Clinic Ben Maddox
- March:** [Michelle Hooper](#), RN-PACU
- April:** [Madisson Emerson](#), CNA, Med-Surg
- May:** [Amanda Munoz](#), Physical Therapist II, Home Health Agency
- June:** [Jennifer Faria](#), Clinical Education Program Coordinator
- July:** [Sonia Sanchez](#), Retail Food Services Manager
- August:** [Yajaira Madera Avonce](#), RN Acute Rehabilitation
- September:** [Hilda Jimenez](#), LVN, Clinics Lead, Urgent Care UCC South
- October:** [Victor Madrigal](#), Rehab Aide, PT
- November:** [Alma Cruse](#), LVN, Clinics Lead, Exeter Health Clinic
- December:** [Daniel Watson](#), Nurse Manager, Acute Psych



Valerie serves as a Human Resources Specialist, a title she's held with distinction for nearly 40 years. She has four full decades of dedication to Kaweah Health—a legacy of service, care, and commitment that few can match.

Valerie is often the very first smile a new employee sees, the calm presence during nervous interviews,

and the helping hand when things get hectic. Whether it's welcoming someone on their first day or remembering someone's name after one brief meeting, she shows people they matter.

Beyond her professional excellence, Val enjoys spending time with her husband Robert and their family,

traveling to the central coast, and gardening—often brightening our offices with flowers from her garden.

Valerie is a model of what we value most—kindness, commitment, excellence, and humility. KH



# Out and About



### Cutler-Orosi LEAP Award

Congratulations to Cutler-Orosi’s three Pre-K sites (Cutler, Palm, and Golden Valley) with the 2024 LEAP Award from the Nutrition Policy Institute! This prestigious award highlights their commitment to supporting healthy eating and active living for their young learners.

This achievement is the result of an impactful partnership between Kaweah Health and Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency’s CalFresh Healthy Living program. Through this collaboration, Cutler-Orosi Unified School District has made incredible strides in promoting physical activity and health education.

Kaweah Health’s CalFresh Healthy Living Program has worked closely with Pre-K teachers to provide annual training, led by our Community Health Worker, Yesenia Avianeda. Yesenia trains teachers on the evidence-based Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) curriculum, which focuses on:

- The difference between “Go Foods” and “Whoa Foods”
- Fun taste-testing activities
- MyPlate nutrition activities
- Encouraging physical activity breaks with the Physical Activity Toolbox

Teachers also use pre- and post-assessments to track the progress and effectiveness of these lessons, which contribute to the PEARS Awards. This recognition is a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in promoting a healthier community.

Congratulations to Cutler-Orosi Unified for this well-deserved recognition! We’re so proud to be part of this journey and grateful to all our partners for making this possible.



### Doc B.A.N.D.

In April, Kaweah Health gave students a hands-on tour of our cutting-edge simulation lab, exploring what a career in healthcare could look like. As part of our partnership with Visalia Unified School District and Central Valley Christian Schools, students learned how to intubate a patient, deliver a baby, stop a bleed, understand ultrasounds, and use NMES (neuromuscular electrical stimulation) in physical therapy to restore muscle function after injury or surgery. The Doc Build and Navigate Your Destiny (Doc B.A.N.D.) is about inspiring the next generation of healthcare professionals and investing directly in our community’s future.



### Healthy Lindsay-Healthy Community Project

Kaweah Health’s commitment to wellness extends beyond the hospital. We believe in meeting our community where they are and providing resources to help you lead a healthy life.

In March, our Community Outreach team – part of our Population Health division – hosted the Second Annual Healthy Lindsay-Healthy Community Project event at St. Anthony Retreat in Three Rivers. The event offered a day of relaxation and learning, featuring activities such as Tai Chi, massages, art, walks, and even haircuts and makeup.

Attendees heard from two inspiring Kaweah Health speakers:

- Maricela Silva-Aguilar, Outpatient Associate Therapist, who discussed building healthy habits for mental wellness.
- Melanie Vela, Ambulatory Care Clinical Pharmacist, who shared insights on vaccinations and traditional medicine.

This event was made possible through a partnership with the Lindsay Family Resource Center.



### Career Technical Education

Kaweah Health Medical Center welcomes Porterville High School as the newest addition to its successful partnership with Tulare and Kings County Career Technical Education (CTE) programs. This collaboration provides high school students with hands-on healthcare experience in a professional medical setting.

Students volunteer across various hospital departments, gaining practical experience in patient care and essential healthcare skills. The Porterville Academy of Health Sciences (PAHS) joins existing program participants from Visalia, Hanford, Orosi, Tulare, and Lindsay.



Angela Duran, a Kaweah Health physical therapist, demonstrates some simple Pilates moves that help strengthen a woman’s pelvic floor, offering relief for many common problems.

# Pelvic Power Matters

Taking care of your core is important.

**T**hat little leak when you laugh. Painful cramping. A feeling of weakness. All these issues could be improved by strengthening your pelvic floor.

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles that form a crucial part of the body’s core, the muscles that support important organs like your bladder and uterus. Keeping them strong helps prevent many common problems, says Angela Duran, a Kaweah Health physical therapist specializing in pelvic health.

“Women often ignore discomfort in their core area because it remains a somewhat taboo subject,” Duran says. “Many think these symptoms are simply what happens after childbirth or aging that must be endured.”

At Kaweah Health Therapy Specialists, Duran works alongside physical therapist Rosalie Rincon and occupational therapist Kelsie Kavadas to help women strengthen their pelvic floor. While women who have undergone C-sections or

hysterectomies may be familiar with the importance of strengthening these core muscles, all women should pay attention to signals their bodies are sending.

Research from the Mayo Clinic, National Institutes of Health, and other organizations show that one in three women experience some form of pelvic health dysfunction. Common symptoms include leaking urine, needing to use the bathroom frequently or urgently, feeling pressure or bulging in the pelvis, pain in the pelvic area, and discomfort during sex.

Duran utilizes Pilates — a system of exercise using controlled movements and breathing techniques to build strength, flexibility, and balance by targeting core muscles.

“The Pilates area provides a safe environment where women can comfortably work on these muscles,” Duran explained.

If you want help, start by talking to your doctor and asking for a referral.



“Even if you only leak a tiny bit of urine, you could benefit from pelvic floor therapy,” Duran noted. “Any woman with leaking, pain, or unusual cramping should ask their doctor about it.” **KH**

For more information on the Pelvic Health Program at Kaweah Health Therapy Specialists, visit [KaweahHealth.org/Pelvic](https://www.kaweahhealth.org/Pelvic).





**Kaweah Health  
has been  
recognized by  
U.S. News  
& World Report  
as a High-Performing  
Maternity Care  
Hospital for 2025.**



We help deliver more than 4,500 babies each year, and our experienced staff is honored to be a part of your growing family.



**Kaweah Health**  
MORE THAN MEDICINE. LIFE.