

Vital Signs



Small Patients, Giant Care

Partnership brings
award-winning pediatric care

Vital Signs

SUMMER EDITION | 2022

VITAL SIGNS

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KAWEAH HEALTH

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FOR YOU.

LETTER FROM THE CEO

Summer is here, and there are many things to celebrate. One of the biggest things we're celebrating this summer is the development of a new facility that will help children and youth get needed mental health services.

As we all know, mental health and wellness is a major issue in Tulare County, and children are among the most impacted, especially as a result of the COVID pandemic. But help is on the way thanks to a partnership with Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA). With a \$4.9 million grant from the California Health Facilities Financing Authority, we're working to give children and youth under age 21 access to crisis intervention services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year right here in Tulare County. Without this grant funding, the development of this facility would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Services at the facility will include crisis evaluation, intervention, and stabilization, as well as psychiatric services and discharge care. Care will be given regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. Because these services are desperately needed, we're working right now to open a temporary space in Visalia as we continue developing a permanent, custom facility. By intervening and treating mental health issues earlier, we hope to avoid future issues or hospitalization and help children live happier and healthier lives.

In addition to developing this facility, we continue our efforts to address the need for new acute care inpatient space, both to modernize care and to replace 206 beds in the Mineral King Wing, which opened in 1969. We continue planning although there are many unknowns, namely whether the State will extend the unfunded 2030 hospital seismic mandate as hospitals struggle financially to recover from COVID losses. We are actively participating in advocacy efforts to change or delay the seismic law, but in the meantime, we continue evaluating the development of a single 240-bed replacement tower as authorized by our board of directors back in December 2021. Once we have more information on designs, cost estimates, or any updates from the State on deadlines, we will come to you with that information so that you can ask questions and provide feedback. We are planning a very comprehensive employee and community engagement effort over the next two years.

We are also excited to celebrate our Graduate Medical Education residency programs this summer. We recently hosted our seventh annual commencement ceremony for these programs. To date, Kaweah Health has graduated 190 resident physicians, 45 percent of whom have remained in the Central Valley to practice medicine.

Even more cause for celebration are our patient safety and quality achievements. Recently, we made Healthgrades' list of 35 top hospitals for cardiac surgery. In California, Kaweah Health was among five hospitals in this recognition and second only to Stanford Health Care. Additionally, we are pleased to report that we received an A grade, the top Hospital Safety Grade for spring 2022 given by the Leapfrog Group, an independent national watchdog organization. We're among the 33 percent of general acute care hospitals graded in the U.S. that earned an A in Leapfrog's bi-annual grading. Top patient-safety experts use hospital data to calculate Leapfrog's safety grades, which are peer-reviewed, fully transparent, and free to the public at www.hospitalsafetyscore.org.

We want to remind you that we have fully reopened for elective surgeries, and we are an accredited Center of Excellence in Minimally Invasive Gynecology since 2013 and Robotic Surgery since 2017 by the Surgical Review Corporation. This means that we have met and continue to meet the nationally-recognized standards. We proudly partner with the following accredited Surgeons of Excellence in Minimally Invasive Gynecology: Mark Wiseman, MD, FACOG; Abraham Betre, DO, FACOOG; Sandra Bosman, MD; and Elizabeth Enderton, DO; and the following accredited Surgeons of Excellence in Robotic Surgery: Abraham Betre, DO, FACOOG; Joseph Ford, DO; and Abiy Meshesha, MD, FACS.

With summer ahead, I'll leave you with a reminder to be safe. Stay hydrated and take care of yourself. When your physician is unavailable and you need care for sprains, strains, and more, our urgent care and QuickCare centers can help keep you healthy, well, and out of the emergency department and our medical center. Have a great summer.



GARY HERBST

Chief Executive Officer
of Kaweah Health

KAWEAH HEALTH

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Small Patients, Giant Care

Partnership brings award-winning pediatric care.



Kaweah Health's pediatric unit is full of brilliant colors and radiant staff members who focus their lives on serving our smallest patients and providing encouragement to parents. The results are immensely appreciated by the community — bringing your children to the hospital can be a nerve-wracking experience for parents and family members. Having such dedicated caregivers in stressful times can make all the difference in the world.

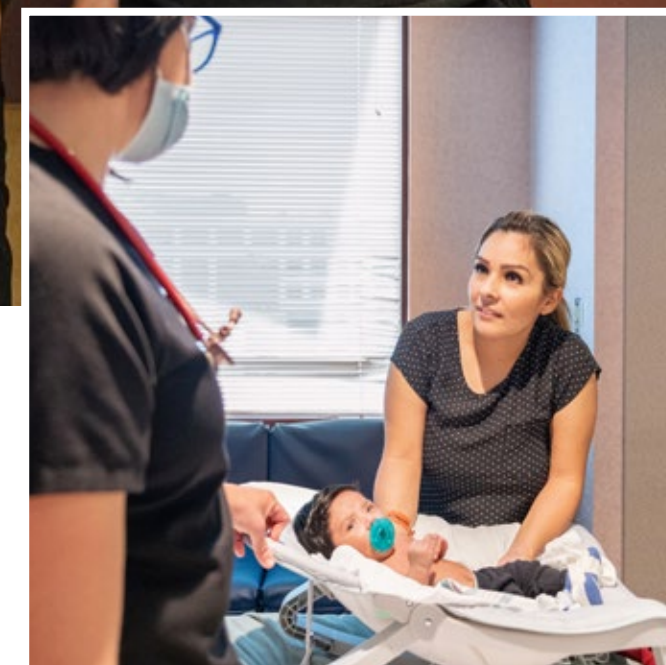
It takes a well-coordinated team to create a smooth experience for these patients and parents who find themselves in an unexpected and oftentimes scary situation. Under the watchful eye of pediatrician and Kaweah Health Medical Director of Pediatrics Julianne Randolph, DO, her nursing team, and community physicians, children who enter the hospital through the emergency room are soon stabilized and connected with one of the physicians dedicated to treating hospitalized patients, also known as hospitalists. Kaweah Health contracts

these pediatric hospitalists from Valley Children's Medical Group specifically to provide on-site care for children who are hospitalized.

The value of having pediatric hospitalists here is immense, as Dr. Randolph emphasizes, "Parents often tell us that they love the education they received, having the same nurse during their child's hospitalization, and the amazing level of care. And they are thankful that they didn't have to leave the area to get high-quality care." According to Dr. Randolph, this five-year-long collaboration between Kaweah Health and Valley Children's Healthcare allows for children to quickly receive the expertise of subspecialists when needed, without having to leave the community. Dr. Randolph explains that while Kaweah Health can handle most common pediatric needs, if a child requires more, they can be transferred to Valley Children's.

Supporting the team of physicians is a compassionate and well-trained pediatric staff. Pediatric nurses receive ongoing training and have specialized certifications they must regularly renew. These high standards and requirements help to create the positive outcomes and experiences that happen here every day.

Anjelica Aguilar knows firsthand the value of having high-quality pediatric care in her hometown. She has been bringing her children to Kaweah Health for pediatric care their whole lives. "Two of my children came to the Emergency Department for emergency appendix operations, and both times the level of care was phenomenal," Anjelica says. "The staff went so far out of the way to make sure that my children were comfortable and safe. And they always made sure that I was okay too, physically and emotionally. People ask me why I didn't take them to Valley Children's instead, and I tell them there's no need — the pediatric care here is stellar."



ABOVE: MEMBERS OF THE PEDIATRIC TEAM, L TO R: NURSE MANAGER DANIELLE GRIMALDI, REGISTERED NURSE MERCEDES CASTRUITA, CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT LUPE DIAZ, MEDICAL DIRECTOR OF PEDIATRICS JULIANNE RANDOLPH, DO, AND REGISTERED NURSE LAUREN THOMPSON.

BELOW: DR. RANDOLPH MEETS WITH KAWEAH HEALTH REGISTERED NURSE MARIA GUERRA WHILE SHE VISITS HER SON MATEO IN THE PEDIATRIC UNIT.

“

Dr. Randolph explained everything in great detail, and I knew exactly what the plan for Mateo's care was going to be. There was great communication every step of the way.

”


Maria Guerra

Parent and Kaweah Health Registered Nurse

The pediatric unit also benefits from important collaborations with the emergency department at Kaweah Health. “We have worked really hard to improve our processes, and in conjunction with the emergency department, we have established an early-warning system that tells how ill a patient is,” Dr. Randolph explains. “This is now active in the emergency department, and it helps staff to more quickly address a critically-ill patient. Our goal here is to help when needed and to have all our team members feel supported.”

Behind this early warning system is a well-trained pediatric nursing staff certified in pediatric advanced life support. Our pediatric nurses undergo special training to better recognize and intervene quickly to children experiencing life-threatening symptoms. This additional training is completed under the guidance of a mentor, includes job shadowing in the neonatal intensive care unit, and must be renewed annually through continuing education.

The hard work and high standards have paid off. “In the beginning, parents might not know we're here,” Dr. Randolph adds. “People who come here experience the intimate care, and they are comfortable coming back. We are honored to receive glowing reviews and many thank you notes from our families.” One of the things parents appreciate most is the hospitalists at Kaweah Health are available 24 hours a day, actually sleeping in the pediatric area and often meeting with parents multiple times each day. For a concerned parent, there is no better reassurance their child will be well-cared for. Also, the pediatric nursing team is outstanding, and they get to know each patient and their parents, which isn't always feasible in a larger organization.

Parent and Kaweah Health Registered Nurse Maria Guerra also knows that if she needs quality care for her children, it's close to home. She recently brought her newborn son Mateo to Kaweah Health and was immediately put at ease. “The doctors and staff treated me just like family. They knew how to talk to Mateo, make sure he was comfortable, and they treated him so lovingly,” says Maria. “Dr. Randolph explained everything in great detail, and I knew exactly what the plan for Mateo's care was going to be. There was great communication every step of the way.” 



By bringing Valley Children's Healthcare services and physicians to Kaweah Health, we enable families to receive care locally and avoid needing to travel over 50 miles to Madera. Especially if a child is admitted to the hospital, it can be a significant hardship to have to travel back and forth to Valley Children's. We work closely with the VCH physicians and leaders to assess our communities' needs, and then we address them. We have brought award-winning pediatric care to Visalia.

Marc Mertz
Chief Strategy Officer, Kaweah Health

Heritage Club Celebrates Life in Full Bloom

Local community members join to secure the future of healthcare in Visalia.

The Kaweah Health Foundation Heritage Club consists of more than 350 community members who want to ensure continued healthcare excellence at Kaweah Health for decades to come. Most of these forward-thinking members have made a commitment of \$5,000 or more in their estate plan; others have paid up-front. To honor these community leaders, every year the Foundation puts on the Heritage Club Dinner – and this year, for the first time, the event happened in spring instead of the fall.

The move was partly made to allow more planning time for Foundation staff, as previously the event came on the heels of the annual Golf Classic. And after two years of holding the dinner remotely, with members picking up their meals and then watching a video online, Foundation staff was ready for a change.

The springtime date inspired the theme: Life in Full Bloom.

“Life in full bloom means you're living life to the fullest – you're giving back to the community and breathing new life into it,” says Foundation Donor Outreach Specialist Carla Hernandez, who leads the event planning each year. “It's an opportunity to celebrate that feeling, that you are in a place to give back.”

For many members, the April 5 event was one of the first large gatherings they'd attended in two years, and the joy was evident among the 140 in attendance. They enjoyed a beautiful outing at the Visalia Country Club, celebrated the nine new members, and remembered the six members who passed away during the last year.


Kaweah Health CEO Gary Herbst spoke at the event, updating everyone on the amazing things happening within the organization, including the growth of the General Medical Education program, the expanded Emergency Department

A TREE ON THE WALL INSIDE THE ACEQUIA WING DISPLAYS THE NAMES OF HERITAGE CLUB DONORS.

opening, the addition of a clinic in Tulare, and Kaweah Health being named one the nation's Best 250 Hospitals by HealthGrades. He also noted that the Heritage Club's endowment fund is now halfway to its goal of \$25 million.

“With this fund, the future of healthcare in Visalia will be in excellent shape,” says Foundation Director Liz Wynn. “Using only interest earned from the fund, the District will be able to purchase equipment, remodel buildings and do whatever it takes to keep producing the same great quality of healthcare for future generations.”

In addition to the annual dinner, the Foundation has installed a piece of art in the Acequia Wing lobby that honors the members who have already given their share. This beautiful tree mimics the Heritage Club logo, and the many names of donors grace the leaves.

This year's dinner was such a success, the planning for the next one started almost immediately after it ended. So mark your calendars for April 18, 2023, when we will once again gather to celebrate the special people who want to see Kaweah Health succeed long after their own time. 

For more information

If you would like more information about the Heritage Club or how to make a planned gift to Kaweah Health Foundation, call (559) 624-2359 or email Foundation@KaweahHealth.org.

You can also visit KaweahHealth.org/heritageclub for more information.

Get Outside, Get Healthy, Stay Safe

The weather is right for getting out and enjoying the many outdoor activities in the Sierra Nevada Mountains and surrounding areas. But before you head out, take some time to get prepared and review these safety tips.

Hiking in Hot Weather

In the mountains, foothills, and valley, temperatures regularly surge during summer, creating fatiguing conditions during long exposure. Before you leave on a summer hike, make sure you're protected from the elements:

- Carry and drink plenty of water.
- Wear light, loose, sweat-wicking clothes.
- Wear a hat and sunscreen.
- Start your hike early.
- Choose a route with plenty of shade and water.
- Rest often.

River Safety

Swimming in rivers during summer can be very dangerous – slippery rocks and icy, swift water are a deadly combination that can sweep you off your feet and carry you downstream in seconds. Be aware and take extra care when near the water with these tips:

- Choose a safe swimming spot: Stay away from areas with strong currents, steep drop-offs, or visible hazards like fallen trees or branches.
- Do not leave children unattended.
- Keep your wits about you – swim sober.
- Wear sturdy shoes. Sharp objects in the water can cut bare feet.
- Avoid rock hopping.
- Do not dive or jump into the water.
- Swim with a friend or group – never swim alone.

Watch Out for Wildlife

Depending where you go, you're likely to run into some kind of wildlife. Encounters with animals like deer, bears, bobcats, or mountain lions are potentially dangerous, so always treat them with great caution. Wild animals can be unpredictable, so keep your distance and never approach or disturb them. Making noise such as talking, clapping, or wearing a bell on your backpack will alert and deter most larger wild animals.

Rattlesnakes

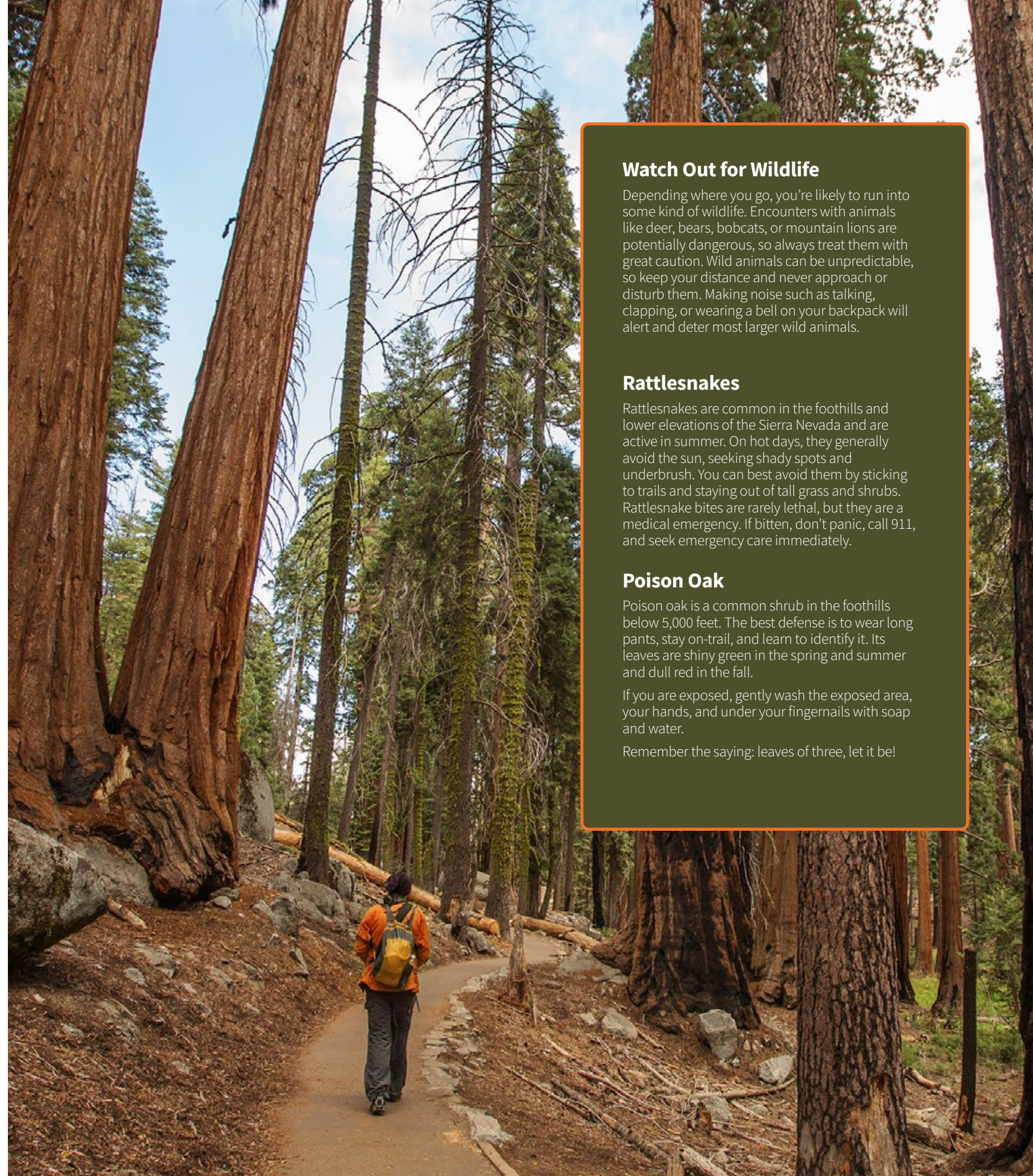
Rattlesnakes are common in the foothills and lower elevations of the Sierra Nevada and are active in summer. On hot days, they generally avoid the sun, seeking shady spots and underbrush. You can best avoid them by sticking to trails and staying out of tall grass and shrubs. Rattlesnake bites are rarely lethal, but they are a medical emergency. If bitten, don't panic, call 911, and seek emergency care immediately.

Poison Oak

Poison oak is a common shrub in the foothills below 5,000 feet. The best defense is to wear long pants, stay on-trail, and learn to identify it. Its leaves are shiny green in the spring and summer and dull red in the fall.

If you are exposed, gently wash the exposed area, your hands, and under your fingernails with soap and water.

Remember the saying: leaves of three, let it be!



Changing Health and Changing Lives

Kaweah Health Community Outreach services are helping people find their way to healthier lives.

Every day, the work of Kaweah Health's Community Outreach is changing lives by leading people down healthier paths. Offering a broad spectrum of activities and services, the Community Outreach team links people in Tulare County with key resources so they can enjoy healthier lives.

Community Outreach's services now include 10 community health workers working throughout Tulare County. Their focus includes a diabetes-education program in English and Spanish, diabetes support groups, chronic pain workshops, chronic disease self-management workshops, nutrition education, Medi-Cal enrollment, and falls prevention.

And the help is much needed. According to the 2017 Tulare County Community Health Assessment, the county's diabetes rate is nearing twice the state-wide average, and it's the fifth-highest among California counties. Also concerning, the death rate for heart disease in Tulare County is 30 percent higher than the state average. These are the sobering realities Kaweah Health's Community Outreach team is working to change.

Diabetes, an area of special focus for the outreach program, is often seen as a death sentence by some, so educating people about it is crucial. The diabetes program uses a pharmacist,

who explains how to manage insulin levels and bring glucose levels under control. Community Outreach Manager Alma Torres-Nguyen notices the program is making a difference, "There is a lot of misunderstanding about insulin and how it works. The pharmacist is very involved in teaching everyone. We have seen a number of participants learn to control their diabetes through the program and say they are no longer afraid of it." There are now more than 20 communities working collaboratively with Kaweah Health to improve local health.

The Healthy Lindsay-Healthy Community grant is funded by the Lindsay District Hospital, and the work is made possible through a strong collaboration with the Lindsay Family Resource Center. Through this local funding, a federal grant from the Administration for Community Living, and a strong partnership with Partners in Care, Kaweah Health's Community Outreach Department is able to provide evidence-based support through the Empowerment for Better Living program. This program offers chronic disease self-management education workshops to help adults with ongoing conditions and caregivers understand how healthier choices can improve quality of life, boost self-confidence, and inspire positive lifestyle changes. The programs provide new ways to exercise and make friends, and the leaders are seeing

truly remarkable changes in participant health and outlook. The program includes a monthly community walk at the Lindsay Park, Bailoterapia (dance therapy), and mental health workshops that are helping participants control their fears.

Community Health Worker/Promotora Marisela Gonzalez has been working to help residents improve their health for 13 years. She has previously worked with Kaweah Health's Hospice and currently works with Lindsay's community members, where she helps with diabetes and chronic illness management and a new mental health support program.

"I lead support groups and dance therapy classes in English and Spanish. It's been very popular, and we now offer them twice a week. I also do exercise therapy and chair exercise," Marisela explains. "People are drawn to our programs in Lindsay through word of mouth and referrals, and they like that we offer the classes regularly."

The participants in the new mental health part of the program are grateful for what is covered in the classes, including learning to cope with anxiety and releasing anxiety through dance therapy. "It has taken time for people to open up since the pandemic, but we are seeing very shy people now able to socialize and deal with anxiety," Marisela says. "One woman got a new job and started working, even though she thought she couldn't. Another woman was depressed because she couldn't have babies, but she said her experience in our program has changed her life."

The other piece of the Administration for Community Living – Empowerment for Better Living – focuses on falls prevention. This program works with older adults and adults with disabilities to engage them in evidence-based programs such as Tai Chi, Bingocize, and Matter of Balance, which can help reduce falls and falls-risk. Community Health Workers Kirk Mills and Dina Cardenas have

been working hard over the last year to build this program, establish partners, and provide the workshops for hundreds of participants throughout the county. Both are certified Tai Chi Instructors and work as a team to deliver these programs, creating synergy to maintain the interest of the participants. In Kirk's observation, these programs have not only reduced their fear of falling but have also helped many seniors increase their socialization and reduce isolation coming out of the current pandemic. Kirk relates, "You can see the light coming

on as they participate in the program and realize they can socialize again and have a good time with their peers." Eustolia Zamora-Bonilla, "Estee," is a Community Health Worker with more than 20 years of experience empowering local residents and advocating for healthy environments and

communities. One of her biggest responsibilities is leading the Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention (NEOP) Program in Tulare County, which provides nutrition education for children. Estee works with 16 early education centers in Tulare County, training preschool teachers how to deliver nutrition and obesity education.

“
One woman got a new job and started working, even though she thought she couldn't. Another woman was depressed because she couldn't have babies, but she said her experience in our program has changed her life.

”
Maria Gonzalez
Community Outreach Health Worker/Promotora

What is a promotora?

Promotoras, or promotores de salud, are Spanish-speaking community health workers. Promotoras serve as liaisons between their community, health professionals, human and social service organizations, often taking the role of advocate, educator, mentor, outreach worker, role model, or interpreter.



OPPOSITE PAGE: COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER ESTEE ZAMORA-BONILLA EDUCATES PEOPLE OF ALL AGES ON HOW TO LIVE LONGER, HEALTHIER LIVES.

THIS PAGE: KAWEAH HEALTH'S COMMUNITY OUTREACH TEAM, L TO R: ALMA TORRES-NGUYEN, ESTEE ZAMORA-BONILLA, SAVANNAH CRIPPEN, ANIS REYNA, KIRK MILLS, MARIA GONZALES, MARIA SOLIS, AND DINA CARENAS.

She was also instrumental in organizing and launching the Dinuba Farmers Market in 2014. “The farmers market is so important for giving people in this area access to nutritious food,” Estee says. “There are some very small and poor communities around here like Sultana and London that are food deserts.”

In many of these communities, Estee trains resident leaders to interact with residents by providing spokesperson training, health education, and Zumba fitness certification. In this way, resident leaders are empowered to become involved and make lasting changes where they live. “I love helping people change. After working with them, I see them progress in their lives. They become important people in their community. It’s incredibly fulfilling to be a part of.”

Kaweah Health is also reaching local residents through the Health Navigator Project, a Medi-Cal enrollment program funded by a California Department of Health Care Services grant. This project has made great strides in connecting important services to the people who need them most: homeless, immigrants and their families, low-wage workers, uninsured children, and youth adults.

The Health Navigator Project has enrolled nearly 500 individuals into Medi-Cal who would otherwise have no access to health care. The project serves people of all ages, most of which are limited English speakers and low-wage workers. Health Navigators like Anis Reyna work with dozens of people on sometimes very complicated cases. They may need to obtain documentation from federal agencies or troubleshoot requirements of an application to ensure that everything is in order. “It’s rewarding when the people you help are so grateful,” says Anis. “Sometimes they call us back to say that they finally got the help they needed, and they are so relieved that they feel better.”

One of the focuses of the project was to connect with young adults, many of whom struggle to make ends meet with the cost of healthcare and the rising cost of food. The outreach team used the Health Navigator Program to reach this group by developing a TV commercial educating them about the importance of having health coverage and how it can help them save money for other important needs. The commercial is making a great impact, helping young adults apply to and navigate programs like CalFresh and Medi-Cal, which allows them to eat and stay healthy on a limited budget.

“
I love helping people change. After helping them, I see them progress in their lives. They become important people in their community. It’s incredibly fulfilling to be a part of.”

”
Eustolia “Estee” Zamora-Bonilla
Community Outreach Health Worker



ABOVE: OUR BAILOTERAPIA CLASS (DANCE THERAPY) IN LINDSAY IS A POPULAR WELLNESS AND FITNESS CLASS OFFERED FOUR TIMES A WEEK.
BELOW: KAWEAH HEALTH’S NAYTHAN RAMOS ACTED IN A COMMERCIAL AIMED TO HELP YOUNG ADULTS ENROLL IN HEALTH CARE AND FIND HEALTHY FOOD.

Kaweah Health’s Community Outreach team members serve on a number of community committees and coalitions such as the Tulare County Diabetes Alliance, Healthy Lindsay, Healthy Community Stakeholder’s Committee, and Network Leaders on the Move Tulare County Partnership, among others. The team also supports the Samaritan Center Free Clinic in Visalia with a full-time staff member and provides other services there such as Medi-Cal enrollment assistance and diabetes education. These important partnerships and collaborations leverage time and resources to provide quality programs that improve the health of Tulare County residents.

Community Outreach Manager Alma Torres-Nguyen is proud of the team she leads, “My Community Outreach team is amazing! They are compassionate, caring individuals who understand the community and are willing to go the extra mile to meet people where they are and assist them with their needs. I am privileged to work with this team, and going home every night I know that the work we do makes a difference!” KH

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Investing in our Community's Health

New hospital will offer the best care possible in Tulare County.

The Road to Now

In 1969, the Mineral King Wing of Kaweah Health Medical Center opened to the public, replacing the Visalia Municipal Hospital built in 1936. When it opened, it was a cutting-edge facility; now, it is more than 50 years old and serves a community that grows larger with each passing year. Times have changed dramatically, and so have the health care needs of the people who live here and the modern facility needs of our providers and staff.

The truth is, the residents of this area cannot grow without quality health care. It's our universal necessity. In order to meet this challenge and improve access to care in Tulare County, Kaweah Health has made it a top priority to develop an affordable plan to replace the Mineral King Wing.

The Road Ahead

Replacing the Mineral King Wing is actually part of Kaweah Health's Master Facility Plan completed in 2002. The plan was created as a roadmap to the next 50 years of care at Kaweah Health and will help ensure that our children, and their children, have a partner in health for every stage of their lives. One of the key parts in Kaweah Health's plan for the future is the commitment to staying in the downtown area and continuing our role as an anchor institution in the City of Visalia.

Driving the deadline to modernize our hospital is California Senate Bill 1953, which requires all hospitals to meet State earthquake standards by 2030. Additionally, the small rooms for patients cannot accommodate modern medical equipment. For the Mineral King Wing to be modernized, the options are to retrofit the current building or build a new structure. After much study, retrofitting is not a viable option for two reasons: 1) it would cost \$150 million — a poor use of public funds, and 2) the hospital would have to close the Mineral King Wing and lose its 206 patient beds for the duration of the estimated two-year construction. In contrast, a new building would create more future beds without losing short-term patient care capacity.

After gathering community input, concepts for a new building were presented to the public. On December 20, 2021, the Kaweah Health Board of Directors authorized hospital management to proceed with planning for a single, multi-story building with up to 240 total beds, more operating rooms, a new pharmacy, a new dietary services area, and a 500-space parking structure.

What We're Doing Today

Moving toward our goal, we are currently working to develop more detailed conceptual plans, identify a financing strategy, and determine potential bond rates. We are working to present these advanced designs to the public and our staff for additional review and feedback by the end of 2022.

The first issue to be addressed is the need for more space for patient care. One of the biggest changes will be larger patient rooms. At 117 square feet, the current wedge-shaped rooms are much too small: modern hospital equipment doesn't fit well, it is difficult for staff to maneuver and work, and there is very little space for visitors. The new rooms will be nearly twice as large, providing a safer, more efficient work environment and a more ideal patient and family experience. Also on the list of upgrades is addressing the aging infrastructure, including electrical, plumbing, and IT systems, ensuring that it will be modernized to match the needs of current technology. The end result will be a contemporary building with larger, more functional rooms, moving Kaweah Health closer to our vision of becoming a provider of world-class care.

Our Promise to the Community

Kaweah Health's promise is to involve the community in every step of this process. We have been highly transparent throughout the early stages of planning, and we are committed to funding as much of the new construction as we can safely afford. At the same time, we cannot take on too much debt while maintaining sufficient cash flows to support operations.

Behind the Numbers

Kaweah Health serves one of the poorest regions in California — 60 percent of Tulare County lives near or below the federal poverty level — and Kaweah Health serves the entire county, regardless of insurance coverage or ability to pay.

In order to ensure that we meet the future needs of the community, Kaweah Health will continue evaluating every possible option for constructing a new hospital building: general obligation bonds, tax-exempt revenue bonds (repaid by the hospital's revenues), operating revenues, cash reserves, grants, corporate sponsorship, and fundraising. We are committed to transparency and encourage open dialogue with the people we exist to serve.

Building a World-Class Team

It is important to remember that Kaweah Health's most valuable asset is not a building or facility — it is our people. Modern facilities are not just better for patients: they help recruit and retain the best employees and physicians. And building a world-class team leads to world-class health care for you and your loved ones.

Everyone deserves access to outstanding health care close to their home, and the new hospital building will deliver that. It's what's best for our patients, staff, providers, and community, and it will serve us well for generations to come. **KH**

Learn More

For updated information on our master facility planning process and upcoming community engagement events, visit KaweahHealth.org/masterplan.



For the fourth year in a row, Kaweah Health has been ranked by Healthgrades™ as one of **America's 250 Best Hospitals**. That puts us in the top five percent of hospitals in the nation, thanks to our employees, physicians, and volunteers, who are leading us to world-class care.

Healthgrades™ is a US company that evaluates hospital quality to help consumers compare services and make informed choices for their health care. Evaluations are based on clinical outcomes for 31 conditions and procedures.



f | y | t | i | **LEARN MORE:** KaweahHealth.org/250Best



Helping You Get Back Up

Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital will always be there for you.

John Martin has had an unusual path on his journey to better health. And while you may find an illogical sense of gratitude throughout his story, John is quick to encourage others to find hope and peace regardless of the challenges they face.

John remembers vividly the evening at the Visalia Convention Center where his four-year-old granddaughter was performing at a dance recital. He was determined not to miss this important event in her life. As he walked across the parking lot, he had to stop to catch his breath — the result of his weight increasing to more than 300 pounds. As he made his way toward the doors, he tripped and fell, crushing his hip and breaking his femur. It took six paramedics to pick him up.

John was taken immediately to Kaweah Health's emergency department, where he underwent surgery and spent eight days recuperating. Through it all, he maintained his outlook of gratitude, noting "The Lord didn't make me fall, but he used the fall to help me get my health better. I never gave up." After his release, John spent four months working with Kaweah Health Physical Therapist Jade Asuncion. "When John arrived for his first physical therapy, he was in a wheelchair and lived with his son. He really wanted to get back on his feet and regain his independence," Jade says. "Eventually, he started walking again and driving himself to appointments, and now he is living on his own again."



OPPOSITE PAGE: JOHN MARTIN HAS WORKED HARD IN HIS REHABILITATION TO REGAIN HIS INDEPENDENCE.

THIS PAGE: JOHN IS MOST GRATEFUL FOR BEING ABLE TO DRIVE AGAIN.



“
*Looking back, I think about how fortunate
 I am to be alive.*
 ”

John Martin
 Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital patient

As part of his physical therapy, John began a new exercise routine and has lost 86 pounds to date. He is proud to note that he has kept the weight off, and currently his only health challenges are cholesterol and blood sugar levels. But there were more surprises along the way.


Shortly after his fall, John developed a heart condition that Kusai Aziz, MD, interventional cardiologist, repaired through a cardiac balloon procedure. Thanks to the care John received in the hospital and at Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital (formerly known as Cypress Rehab), John’s heart is now healthy. But even more unknown health issues loomed.

Following John’s treatment came a dizzy spell that became a fall, and then a five-day stay at Kaweah Health Medical Center, where the staff discovered he was dehydrated, his blood pressure was high, and his kidneys were on the verge of shutting down. After leaving the hospital, it was back to Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital for recovery. Through it all, John didn’t give up, thanks to his supportive hospital staff and his very close friends.

“I love the people at Kaweah Health Rehab. They really helped me. They worked with me, helped me get in and out of the wheelchair, and encouraged me when I was afraid of falling. My therapist understood my fear, and she was so reassuring.” Physical Therapist Courtney Williams, who worked with John, understands, “A fall like that can be challenging to recover from. It’s difficult to balance, and patients are always scared to put weight on it as they are working to regain their endurance and confidence”

John has learned a lot about himself as a result of his challenges. “The times I had to go to rehab made me realize I can do more things on my own. And through it all, I had the sweetest nurses and therapists I could have ever met,” John recalls. “I can’t praise Kaweah Health enough.” John’s physical therapists were

equally as grateful. “John was very easy to work with. He set his goals and worked really hard during his therapy sessions and at home to reach them,” remembers Jade. “And he always told us how much he appreciated the work we did.”

Throughout his challenges, John was also able to utilize the services of Kaweah Health Home Health, which provided therapy, helped him to get up, and helped him to become mobile again. “Looking back, I think about how fortunate I am to be alive,” John realizes. “All of Kaweah Health’s nurses and home health staff were great. Today, I’m setting goals to take better care of my health so I can avoid the heart disease that took my dad, brother, and cousin. I want to see my grandkids grow up.” 



Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital offers many types of care including

- Cardiac rehabilitation
- Pulmonary rehabilitation
- Brain injuries
- Stroke
- Joint replacement
- Parkinson’s disease

For a complete list of programs available at Rehabilitation Services visit [KaweahHealth.org/rehab](https://www.KaweahHealth.org/rehab)



**It takes
 regular
 maintenance.**

So does your body.

Life gets busy. We get it. But you wouldn’t expect your car to keep running without a little maintenance. Your body is no different, and future generations are counting on you. Show them you care by making time for a yearly checkup.

For a complete directory of Kaweah Health physicians, visit [KaweahHealth.org/Physicians](https://www.KaweahHealth.org/Physicians).

**Join us in the pursuit of
 healthiness.**



f | y | t | i VISIT: [KaweahHealth.org/Physicians](https://www.KaweahHealth.org/Physicians)

Education Program Hits Its Stride

Kaweah Health shines in the role of “teaching hospital.”



Each year, Kaweah Health’s Graduate Medical Education Residency Program welcomes a new group of medical student graduates to our six residency programs. The competition to get in is high — thousands of candidates apply, hundreds are interviewed, but fewer than 50 are selected to join. At any one time, there are more than 120 residents in various stages of training in our outstanding programs.

What exactly is Graduate Medical Education (GME)? After medical school, graduates must complete a period of training, known as residency, to become a licensed doctor in the United States. During residency, doctors learn skills and techniques related to their chosen specialty. They work under the supervision of attending physicians and are part of a care team. They are trained in quality improvement, patient safety, and evidence-based medicine. It’s an important part of their professional development where they get to work in a real hospital environment while staying on top of the latest developments and research in their fields. As the doctors of tomorrow, these resident physicians are an important asset to the care delivered every day at Kaweah Health.

Established in 2013, Kaweah Health’s Department of GME offers residency programs in Anesthesiology, Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine, Psychiatry, General Surgery, and Transitional Year. The program also provides numerous medical student rotations. Since its inception, the GME program has graduated 190 resident physicians.

The goal of the GME program is to train resident physicians to provide high quality, evidence-based care while leading a multidisciplinary team. The programs foster system-based, quality improvements and advocate for patient access to health care for patients of all backgrounds and economic statuses.

Our first class of GME physicians graduated in June 2016, and we celebrate the fact that almost half of all our graduates since then have decided to stay and practice in the local area.

The strategic vision to embark on education is paying dividends in our community. Kaweah Health’s Chief of Medical Education Lori D. Winston, MD, states, “We’re thrilled to continue to build this legacy of Kaweah Health as a teaching hospital. Current plans are to continue to build additional programs in specialties like neurology.” She adds, “Our community can be very proud to know Kaweah Health Medical Center is a teaching organization.”

When they are not caring for patients, the resident physicians train inside Kaweah Health’s Margaret Foley Graduate Medical Education Center. The center houses offices, classrooms, conference rooms, and the Lynn Havard Mirviss Education Center, a clinical education and simulation training facility. There, resident physicians train on high-tech equipment like SimMan3G®, a portable and advanced patient simulator that challenges and tests clinical and decision-making skills during realistic patient-care scenarios.

In addition to the six residency programs, Kaweah Health has also established multiple fellowship programs in emergency ultrasound, clinical teaching and simulation, and child and adolescent psychiatry. These fellowship programs are training programs offered after residency to provide more specialized education in a specific discipline. After COVID, there is a marked increase in the need for mental health services for children and adolescents. Developing a child and adolescent fellowship program trains providers to address this local need.

The GME program is also part of a pipeline to mentor local students. It introduces trainees to physicians who act as mentors, helping them navigate the long journey to independent practice. “A mentor physician helped me to see the importance of having the endurance to see everything through,” Dries Van Dyk, DO recalls. “He showed me that despite all of the challenges you’ll face becoming a doctor, you have to have the confidence and endurance to push through all the hard things and the mindset to keep pushing. Finding opportunities to gain experience and having a good mentor is so important. There were definitely days when I wondered if I was going to make it. It’s important to meet someone who has done it and can offer support and encouragement.”

“

“I appreciate that I can take my children camping, like I enjoyed as a kid. I love that we have access to the mountains, and the beach is nearby,”

”

Dr. Sean Oldroyd, MD
GME program graduate and new Emergency Medicine Residency Program Director

Getting accepted into Kaweah Health’s GME program is very competitive — only about one percent of applicants are chosen. Why do so many residents want to come here? Kaweah Health has an appealing mix of a great location, some of the best facilities, and a talented team of in-house staff and faculty engaged in graduate medical education. We have also invested in expanding our campus with the creation of the Acequia Wing, providing our community with brand-new surgical suites, laboratories, and a long list of technological advances. And of course, they love the location. “I appreciate that I can take my children camping, like I enjoyed as a kid. I love that we have access to the mountains, and the beach is nearby,” says Sean Oldroyd, DO, a GME program graduate and new Emergency Medicine Residency Program Director.

Match Day is a very special time at Kaweah Health. The National Residency Matching Program uses a complicated algorithm, whereby most medical school graduates from around the world learn which residency program they will train in for the next three to seven years. On Match Day, March 19, 2022, Kaweah Health announced its next class of

48 residents, who will begin their residency programs at Kaweah Health in late June. We are honored to welcome them to Kaweah Health and the community of Visalia. If you happen to meet one of our new residents around town, be sure to say hello! [KH](#)



OPPOSITE PAGE: CHIEF OF MEDICAL EDUCATION LORI D. WINSTON, MD WORKS WITH GME RESIDENTS IN THE SIMULATION LAB.

THIS PAGE: DR. OLDROYD AND HIS FAMILY IN YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK.

Resident Community Hosting Program

Doctors in our GME program often have difficulty finding short-term, affordable housing while they are completing their residency. The first few months are especially challenging as they are acclimating to a new job and a new community. Kaweah Health’s Resident Community Hosting Program places incoming residents with people in the community who can provide a private bedroom and access to shared living space. The program aims to simplify this transition for residents as they enter the next phase of their education. The benefits are great for the community too – the more welcomed and at-home residents feel, the more likely they will stay and practice in the community once their residency is completed.

If you would like more information on hosting a resident, please contact

Llareli Garcia
GME Program Coordinator
llcarras@KaweahHealth.org
(559) 624-5211

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**Kaweah Health wishes you
a healthy Fourth of July.**



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