

Vital Signs

An Open Door to All

Dialysis clinic is open to all who need help.

Special Section

Annual Report



Vital Signs

FALL EDITION | 2022

VITAL SIGNS

IS A PRODUCT OF
KAWEAH HEALTH

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

KAREN TELLALIAN

MARKETING STAFF

GREG BITNEY

DAVID CELAYA

CHERYL JOHNSON

RAYMOND MACARENO

PATRICK MOORMAN, JR

MARK QUESADA

GARY ROGERS

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](mailto:MARKETSTAFF@KAWEAHHEALTH.ORG)
OR CALL (559) 624-2463.



ON THE COVER

KAWEAH HEALTH
REGISTERED NURSE
NAMEE SEE HELPS
PATIENT DELIA
SALVATIERRA WITH HER
DIALYSIS TREATMENT.

4

STEPS TO RECOVERY

HIGH-TECH TOOL MAKES
GREAT REHABILITATION
CARE EVEN BETTER.

SPECIAL SECTION

ANNUAL REPORT

26

KEEPING CARE CLOSE TO HOME

NEONATAL UNIT IS GIVING
ALL BABIES A CHANCE.

8

COLLABORATING TO SAVE LIVES AND A SENSE OF SELF

SURGEONS TEAM UP
FOR BETTER CARE AND
OUTCOMES.

21

CARING FOR OUR CAREGIVERS

A CHANCE TO HONOR
THOSE WHO CARE FOR A
CAREER

28

OPEN HEARTS, OPEN ARMS

KAWEAH HEALTH RUTH
WOOD OPEN ARMS HOUSE
IS HELPING FAMILIES WITH
END-OF-LIFE CARE.

10

GROWING FOR YOU AND OUR COMMUNITY

LETTER FROM THE CEO

We are hard at work to improve access to specialty care for those who live and work in Tulare County, one of the most clinically-underserved counties in California. There is just one primary care physician for every 2,350 people in Tulare County, a doctor-to-patient ratio that ranks 49th out of 58 California counties. The need is also great for specialty care. A recent community needs study conducted by the Coker Group found that while there should be 11 urologists in Tulare County, there are only four. And, those who have Medi-Cal, which is 55 percent of our population, have virtually no access to urology services close to home.

To address this community need, we have collaborated with Keck Medicine of University of Southern California (USC). Together, we have opened a urology clinic in downtown Visalia – just one block east of the Medical Center – where men and women of this community can access a world-renowned urology program currently ranked in the top 10 in the nation by U.S. News and World Report. Kaweah Health is running the clinic in coordination with Inderbir S. Gill, M.D., chair and distinguished professor of urology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and executive director of USC Urology, part of Keck Medicine. Dr. Gill's team of highly-specialized, reputable, and internationally-known experts provides general urology services and subspecialty urological care. The clinic is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays at 325 S. Willis St., Visalia. For more information, visit KaweahHealth.org/Urology or call (559) 624-4026. Through this collaboration with USC Urology, we can ensure that our Medical Center patients have regular, on-call access to a urologist.

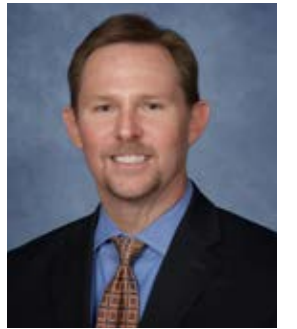
This collaboration will complement the work of our excellent existing urologists in Tulare County such as Joseph Ford, D.O., Tu-Hi Hong, M.D., and Marty Prah, M.D. We also believe this collaboration will help us recruit additional urologists to the area. Urology has been at the top of our recruitment list for years. Yet despite all our efforts, it remains a difficult specialty to recruit. We strongly believe that this partnership with USC will help us recruit new urologists who want to live and practice medicine in Tulare County. Once recruited, the urologists will be employed by USC and will see patients in the new urology clinic as well as in our rural health clinics. Again, we will have more information available soon on this collaborative effort with USC Urology.

Our Tulare Clinic, which opened last year on the corner of Prosperity Avenue and Mooney Boulevard, is also now providing specialty care services. In addition to the excellent primary care already available, patients of the clinic now have access to specialty services such as pediatrics, cardiology, orthopedics, diabetes care, surgery, and urology, with more specialties on the way. This expansion of services in Tulare is allowing us to bring specialty care to a community that remains underserved. The Tulare clinic accepts patients with commercial insurance, Medicare, and Medi-Cal coverage. To schedule an appointment, please call (559) 685-7100.

We are also working hard to address the nursing shortage being felt locally and nationally. In addition to our strong partnerships with local nursing schools, we are very pleased to announce a newly-formed partnership with Unitek Learning, the parent company of several distinguished learning institutions. Together, we will produce skilled and educated graduates who are ready to enter the medical field and serve our community.

Through this partnership, employees of Kaweah Health can start their career in nursing through Unitek's Bachelor of Science in nursing (BSN) program as soon as 2023. At full enrollment, the Kaweah Health School of Nursing, powered by Unitek, will graduate up to 50 Kaweah Health registered nurses each year. The college also offers a licensed vocational nurse-to-BSN advancement option for the Bachelor of Science in nursing program.

We hope that you are as excited as we are about these new developments to address our community health needs. As we welcome fall, we hope that your family, friends, and employees remain healthy, but also reassured by this expansion of services in Tulare County.



GARY HERBST

Chief Executive
Officer of
Kaweah Health

KAWEAH HEALTH

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Zone 1

Mike Olmos

Zone 2

Lynn Havard Mirviss
RN, Ed.D
Vice President

Zone 3

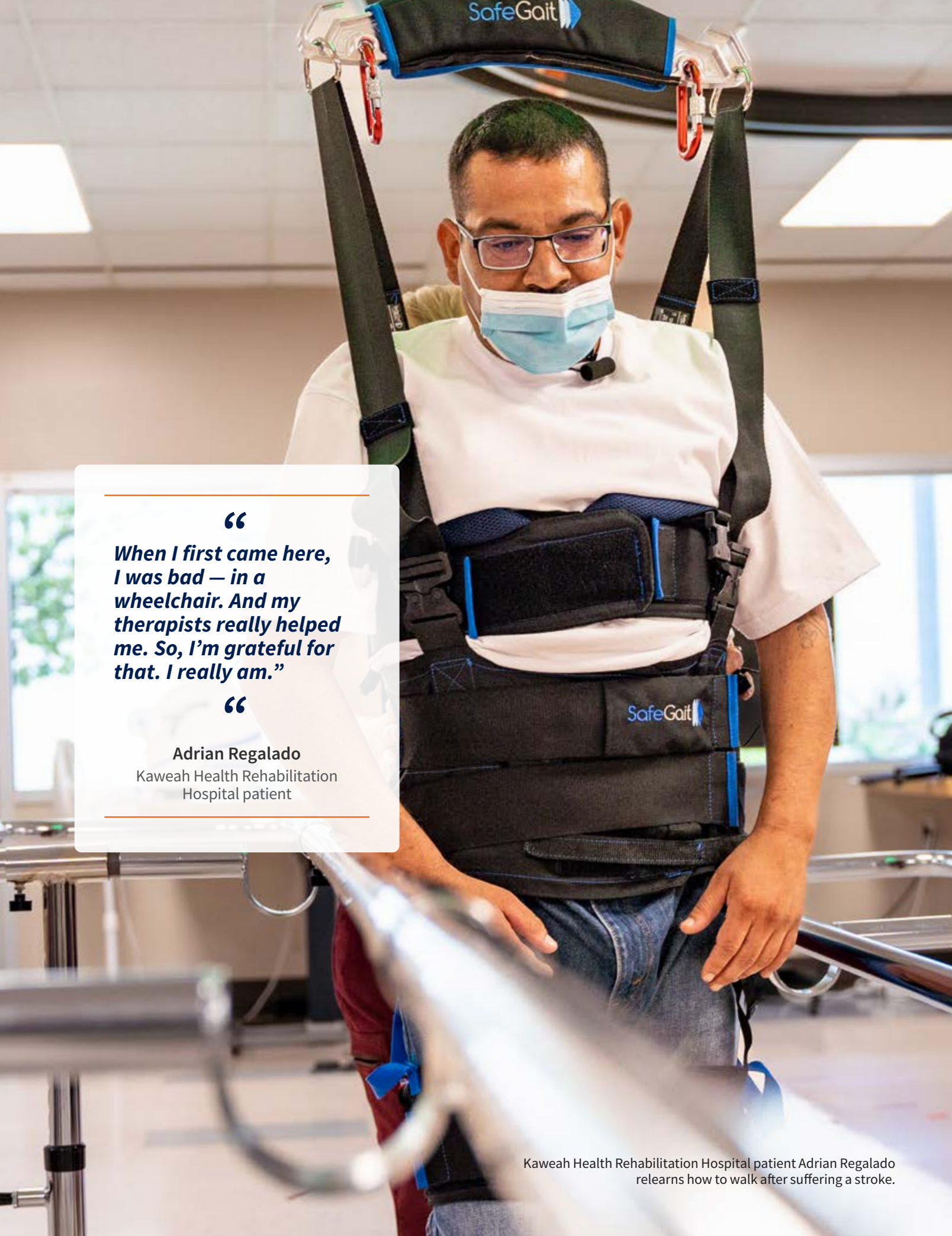
Garth Gipson
Secretary/Treasurer

Zone 4

David Francis
President

Zone 5

Ambar Rodriguez



Steps to Recovery

High-tech tool makes great rehabilitation care even better.

Walking into the Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital therapy room, you are immediately met with inspiration and hope. It is a large, open space, and there is activity everywhere. People are walking, stretching, challenging themselves, and working toward recovery. The atmosphere is one of cooperation, support, and success, with staff highly motivated to get each patient back to where they were. As patients move closer to their goals, one thing is apparent – the compassionate Kaweah Health staff is right there with them, sometimes literally at every step along the way.

On this day, one person stands out among the patients working with weights or relearning how to grab and hold small objects. Adrian Regalado is a patient recovering from a recent stroke and is taking some of his first steps since starting his rehabilitation. But instead of the three or four therapists that would normally be needed to help support his weight, manage his limbs, and provide extra safety, only two are now required.

This is because Adrian is using the newest piece of equipment in the rehabilitation hospital: the SafeGait 360° Balance and Mobility Trainer® by Gorbel, a body-weight support and fall-protection system. Wearing equipment similar to a rock-climbing harness that is connected to a ceiling track, Adrian is supported as he takes each step. For patients learning to walk again, the prospect of falling is very real and can limit a patient's progress.

The SafeGait 360° at Kaweah Rehabilitation Hospital is the top-of-the-line model and was a gift from Kaweah Health Foundation. With just more than 100 feet of track and multiple curves, it is the longest track in the country, and it is the only SafeGait 360° in California. Therapy

Supervisor Tara Norman is very excited about the its impact for patients and staff, "It's really increased the ways we have to work with patients in a very safe manner. Patients really like it, too. It helps build their confidence because they don't have to worry about falling."

So far, the physical therapists have used SafeGait 360° to help people with a variety of conditions, though it has primarily been used with the stroke population. People with any form of neurological disorder like Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, or Guillain-Barre syndrome can benefit from using it. It can also help people with incomplete spinal cord injuries and the amputee population.

Depending on the needs of the patient, the machine can reduce a person's weight by up to 50 percent. Patients are secured in a harness, which is attached to a rectangular control unit connected to a track in the ceiling. Once in the harness, the device works to effectively make patients weigh less. With less weight on a patient's limbs, relearning the complex coordination of walking is a

much easier task. SafeGait 360° also helps with other everyday movements like going from a sitting position to a kneeling position or getting up off the ground.

Today, the patient Adrian is in a good mood. He is focusing on some challenging rehabilitation skills like going up a small set of stairs and lifting each arm while on his hands and knees. He has made some progress and feels positive about the results. Throughout the session, the therapists encourage him and know how to push him to achieve his recovery plan. "The SafeGait 360° technology has allowed us to progress these patients more quickly. We can do things safely with the patients in the first week of therapy that would have taken two or three weeks to do in the past," Tara explains.

As Adrian's rehabilitation journey continues, he shares his gratitude, "When I first came here, I was bad – in a wheelchair. And my therapists really helped me. So, I'm grateful for that. I really am."

Adrian's wife, Elizabeth Regalado, is also grateful, "He's progressed a lot

“
When I first came here, I was bad – in a wheelchair. And my therapists really helped me. So, I'm grateful for that. I really am.
”

Adrian Regalado
Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital patient

Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital patient Adrian Regalado relearns how to walk after suffering a stroke.



Physical therapy patient Adrian Regalado (right) and wife Elizabeth at Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital

“The doctor told him he can fully recover. It just depends on how hard he wants to work on it. He’s determined, and his therapists are going to keep pushing him to get there.”

Adrian’s wife Elizabeth

Adrian uses the SafeGait 360° to practice walking independently.

so far. At first, he couldn’t hold himself up without buckling, but now he can pretty much stand on his own.” And she’s very hopeful for the future, “The doctor told him he can fully recover, it just depends on how hard he wants to work on it. He’s determined, and his therapists are going to keep pushing him to get there.”

There is a large team of more than 20 staff at the rehabilitation hospital consisting of physical therapists, physical therapy assistants, occupational therapists, speech therapists,

rehab aides, and office support staff, all of whom support the rehabilitation goals of the many patients who come here.

The team’s investment in their work is apparent in the relationships they have and the quality of their work. “I’ve been here for 14 years because I really love it,” Tara says. “The biggest part of that is our team — we are very collaborative, helpful, and we are always learning from each other because we want to be better. Our patients really benefit from it.”

As with many jobs in a healthcare setting, there can be many challenges, but there are just as many rewards. “A lot of times we work with patients going through the worst time in their lives,” shares Tara. “But they are incredibly grateful for how we help and support them. Many of them keep in touch and visit us after they leave. It makes you feel really good about what you do. You can ask any of our team members — they get a lot of joy working here.” **KH**



Members of Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Services. Front, L-R: Nicole Hannigan, Martha Lopez, Purvi Ghai, Patricia Aguilera, Veronica McClure, Art Castro, Jazmine Barajas, Tara Norman, Ruthie Toews, Melissa Solorio. Back, L-R: Marisol Perez Aburto, Grace Perry, Kelsey Walsh, Kayla Garcia-Diaz, Nathan Vigil, Kayla Smith. Not pictured: Danny Pavlovich, Anne Valera, Nadia Fahoum, Ramiro Rodriguez



Worth Celebrating

Kaweah Health Urology has joined with Keck Medicine of USC.

Urology deals with diseases affecting the urinary tract and reproductive organs. If you’ve ever suffered from one of these illnesses, you know they can be serious and require immediate attention. You’ll also be glad to know that Kaweah Health has formed an alliance with Keck Medicine of USC.

USC Urology is consistently ranked among the top 10 in the country by *U.S. News & World Report* for high-quality urology care. These board-certified urologists are leading experts in the field, bringing with them the latest in diagnostic and treatment techniques.

If you think you are dealing with a urological illness, talk to your doctor or call us at **(559) 624-4026**.

The pursuit of healthiness



in alliance with
Keck Medicine of USC

325 South Willis Street • Visalia, CA 93291

(559) 624-4026

VISIT: KaweahHealth.org/Urology

Carol Machado, MD and Alex Lechtman, MD, FACS prepare for an oncoplastic breast surgery.



Collaborating To Save Lives And A Sense Of Self Surgeons team up for better care and outcomes.

It was not that long ago when a mastectomy, the removal of breast tissue as a way to treat breast cancer, was a one-dimensional procedure. Surgeons focused on removing the cancer, sending the patient home, and saving her life in the process. And while these procedures may well have saved many lives, there were significant scars left behind, and not just physical ones. In fact, numerous studies found in the National Library of Medicine cite that mastectomies in patients with breast cancer can severely affect patients' self-esteem and cause depression, anxiety, and stress. Surgeons in the field of oncoplastic breast surgery began to realize the importance of not just saving patients' lives, but also their sense of self.

In the last 20 years, oncoplastic breast surgery has become a growing surgical practice with strong patient outcomes. Combining the principles of breast cancer surgery with plastic surgical techniques, the goal of oncoplastic breast surgery is to effectively remove the cancer while minimizing the unwanted effects of surgery. Breast cancer and plastic surgery techniques differ significantly, with each one requiring a different approach. Because of this, oncoplastic surgery is a collaborative effort from the start. Two surgeons, an oncologic surgeon and a plastic surgeon, work together before each surgery to create a unique plan that will safely remove cancerous tissue while minimizing skin and nipple removal. During the surgery, the

oncologic surgeon will remove the tumor, a small amount of surrounding tissue, and possibly some of the nearby lymph nodes. Then, the plastic

“
When they wake up, there's no negative reminder — they are so much better emotionally. They leave feeling whole.

“

Dr. Carol Machado

On the physical and psychological benefits of oncoplastic surgery

surgeon will perform a bilateral breast reduction or lift and typically place tissue expanders to begin the reconstruction. There are several benefits to these surgeries:

- it requires only one surgical session;
- it allows a greater amount of tissue to be removed, which can be helpful for larger tumors;
- it makes it easier to produce symmetrical breasts;
- it is performed before radiation therapy, which helps patients avoid potential complications of exposing surgical wounds to radiation; and
- it minimizes the psychological shock that some women experience after mastectomy.

Alex Lechtman, MD, FACS is a board-certified plastic surgeon who has been practicing in Visalia for 23 years, providing expert and compassionate plastic surgery procedures in the Central Valley. He is the only plastic surgeon in Tulare County with hospital privileges, which means he is allowed to operate in fully-accredited facilities such as Kaweah Health Medical Center.

Carol Machado, MD is a general surgeon and Central Valley native from Merced who has been practicing in Visalia for four years. Breast cancer surgery makes up the majority of her practice, and she is an active member of the American Society of Breast Surgeons.

Dr. Machado first learned about oncoplastic surgery about seven years ago, when she was finishing her surgical training. It was the most technologically-current technique, but it was not widely practiced in the Central Valley, if even at all. She decided that she was going to be the one to start doing it — she just needed to find an experienced plastic surgeon to join her.

“I went to Dr. Lechtman and told him, ‘I want to do this new thing that nobody is doing here.’ So, I shared all of the literature and photos, and we talked a lot about it, and he was super receptive,” Dr. Machado recalls.

“When Dr. Machado came to me with the idea, I realized what an important opportunity it was and that I had better step up,” Dr. Lechtman says. “It’s been really exciting. We’ve learned a lot over the last few years, and our patients have had some really amazing outcomes.”

The most critical part of the procedure is the planning: reviewing images, consulting all of the special-



Breast cancer patient Cyndi Fernandez and her dog Chelsea are grateful for the work of Dr. Machado and Dr. Lechtman.

ists involved, and evaluating every factor that makes each breast cancer unique such as tumor size, tumor position, breast size, breast density, and patient expectations. “The planning is really important,” Dr. Machado explains. “Of course, removing all of the cancerous tissue is the primary concern, but there are different techniques we can use to hide incisions or leave skin that will help with the reconstruction.”

The procedure begins with both doctors in the operating room. Dr. Machado starts by doing the mastectomy and treating the breast cancer, and Dr. Lechtman takes over immediately after for the reconstruction. The entire procedure takes about three to four hours.

Both doctors acknowledge the help of their colleague Kyle B. Potts, MD, a general surgeon at Kaweah Health who sometimes assists Dr. Machado and Dr. Lechtman with these surgeries. “When I have really difficult cases, I invite Dr. Potts, and we operate on both breasts at the same time,” Dr. Machado says. “It’s better for patient outcomes, and there’s a shorter operating time — it reduces the operating time by half when we work together.” She adds, “Dr. Potts has really gone out of his way so that we can do these cases together.”

So far, Dr. Machado and Dr. Lechtman have done more than 20 oncoplastic procedures together. Dr. Machado underscores the important benefits to patients, “Oncoplastic surgery has far-superior physical and psychological outcomes, and it preserves normalcy for patients. When they wake up, there’s no negative reminder — they are so much better emotionally. They leave feeling whole.”

One of the many people this team has helped, Cyndi Fernandez, was diagnosed with breast cancer three years ago when she was referred to Dr. Machado. “I was really upset and scared, but Dr. Machado calmed me down. As a woman, she really understands how you feel,” Cyndi says. “Later, she introduced me to Dr. Lechtman, and they explained everything to me about my case. Today, I’m healthy, and I feel great. They are a phenomenal team.” KH

Growing for You and our Community



A preliminary concept draft of the proposed new Kaweah Health hospital building in downtown Visalia

PRELIMINARY CONCEPT - DRAFT

Beginning with the construction of our first hospital in 1969, Kaweah Health has been committed to growing with the community, and we have done so with an eye on the healthcare needs of the people who live here. With each decade of growth, we have responded with more services and facilities in new locations, providing easier access to high-quality care here in our community.

From our earliest days, Kaweah Health has belonged to the community — a public, nonprofit, hospital owned by the people who live here. We do not have shareholders, and 100 percent of our revenue is reinvested in local people, facilities, and life-saving technology. This is reflected in how we provide care to anyone needing it, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. We are providers of health care to everyone, often serving low-income populations, senior

citizens, people with disabilities, children in foster care, those with mental health issues, and pregnant women, among others.

Although Kaweah Health receives funding from local taxpayers, 99 percent of our revenue comes from

patient insurance, Medicare and Medi-Cal reimbursements, and private pay. Local taxpayers contribute approximately \$1.6 million in general annual funding to Kaweah Health through a general allocation of tax revenues. That \$1.6 million is what

it costs to run the hospital for about 17 hours, amounting to two tenths of one percent of the annual operating costs at Kaweah Health. The rest of the revenue necessary to operate our health system comes from the patient services we provide.

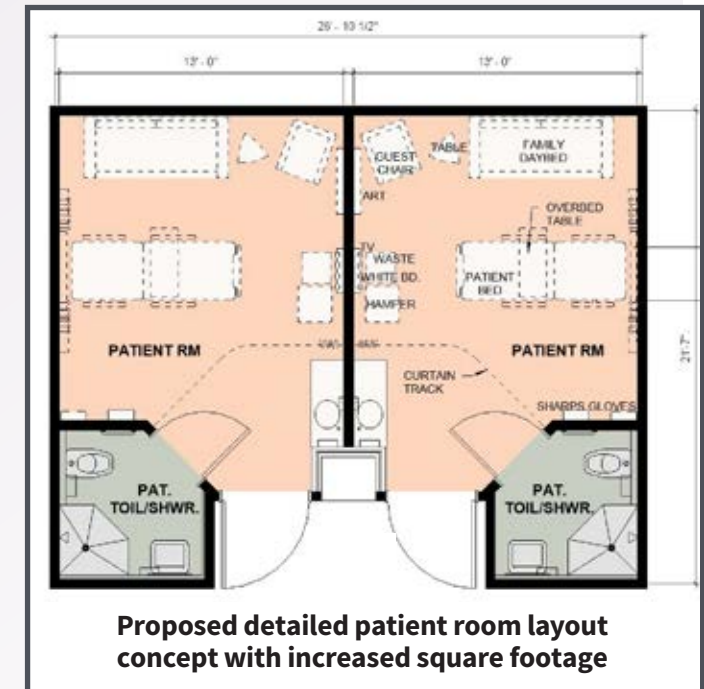
Kaweah Health is, and always has been, *your* hospital, growing to meet *your* needs. Twenty years ago, the Acequia Wing brought cardiovascular services and more post-delivery rooms for the mother-baby unit. In 2020, we added more ICU beds and a state-of-the-art neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), greatly increasing the level of care available close to home. In the spring of 2021, we doubled the size of the emergency department, adding more patient rooms and capacity for emergency care. We have also brought new clinics to our neighboring rural communities in Woodlake, Dinuba, Exeter, Lindsay, and Tulare. And as we look to the future, we are bringing

more neurosurgery, urology, and vascular services.

A vital part of our vision for the future is modernizing patient rooms and growing the number of hospital beds available to our community. Housing is up, industry is growing, and a dispersed workforce model is bringing more people to the area, so we must stay ahead of that growth. Currently, there are 435 hospital beds downtown, more than 60 percent of all inpatient hospital beds in Tulare County. Close to half of those, 206 beds, are in the Mineral King Wing of the original hospital from 1969 and are in need of replacement. The small, wedge-shaped rooms were not designed for modern care. New patient rooms will be almost twice the size, with plenty of room for equipment, staff, and visitors. In addition to being outdated, these 206 beds will need to be replaced by 2030,

as required by California Senate Bill 1953.

Growing to meet the demands of the future will definitely require new facilities, but the end result will mean

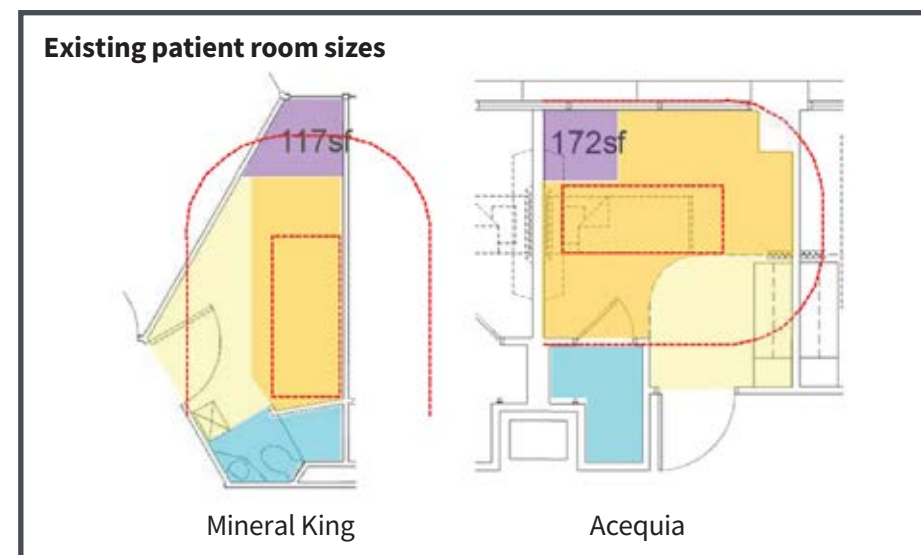


Proposed detailed patient room layout concept with increased square footage

more than just new beds and bigger rooms. Creating state-of-the-art facilities will make Kaweah Health a sought-after place for medical professionals to practice. The best facilities attract the best physicians, specialists, nurses, and support staff, which translates to higher-quality care for you. As we remained focused on providing excellent care for our community, you can be sure we will grow with you. When you need outstanding health care close to home, we are going to be here for you, for life. 

“
As we continue to grow our services to meet the needs of a growing population, Kaweah Health remains committed to our vision of becoming your world-class healthcare choice, for life.

“
Marc Mertz
Kaweah Health
Chief Strategy Officer



Existing patient room sizes

Mineral King

Acequia

More moments like these.



courageous



resilient



ready



**2021
2022**
Annual Report

CANCER. Nobody likes to talk about it, but when it touches you or someone you love, it's all you can think about. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and we're asking you to think about it now.

The staff and resources at Kaweah Health Imaging & Breast Center are literal life-savers, but they need you to do your part. Early detection and prevention are key to beating breast cancer.

If you're a woman, schedule that mammogram. If you smoke, quit. And no matter who you are, get a yearly checkup. To learn more about preventing and beating cancer, visit KaweahHealth.org/BreastCenter.

We want you to enjoy more moments like these.

The pursuit of healthiness



VISIT: KaweahHealth.org/BreastCenter



The pursuit of healthiness goes well beyond hospital care. It's about helping our community thrive.



The pursuit of healthiness





Gary Herbst
Chief Executive Officer

Kaweah Health Board Members

Zone 1

Mike Olmos
Secretary/Treasurer

Zone 2

Lynn Havard Mirviss
RN, Ed.D - Vice President

Zone 3

Garth Gipson

Zone 4

David Francis
President

Zone 5

Ambar Rodriguez

This community is the reason we exist. It was this community that founded the Kaweah Delta Health Care District back in 1961 to meet the healthcare needs of its people. No matter the challenges we face as a healthcare organization, health is our passion, excellence is our focus, and compassion is our promise. Over the last 60 years, we have grown into the largest district hospital in the state, and each day we provide access to award-winning services – trauma care, heart care, stroke care, cancer care, neurosurgery, general surgery, and many more.

In the last year, we have accomplished some phenomenal work in our quest to become your world-class healthcare choice for life:

- We continued to deliver essential healthcare services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to thousands of Central Valley residents.
- We were named one of America’s 250 best hospitals and 50 best hospitals for cardiac surgery by Healthgrades, and we received two consecutive A grades from the Leapfrog Group, both independent evaluators.
- We graduated 42 resident physicians through our six residency programs in our effort to bring more doctors to the Central Valley.
- We partnered with Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency to bring a 24-hour youth in crisis stabilization unit to Tulare County for our under 21 population.
- We developed the Kaweah Health School of Nursing with partner Unitek to help Kaweah Health employees start their career in nursing as soon as 2023. At full enrollment, the program will graduate up to 50 Kaweah Health nurses a year.
- We installed the SafeGait 360° Balance and Mobility Trainer®, which is helping people learn to walk again after stroke, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, amputation, and more. It’s the only one in California and has the longest track in the nation.
- We reopened the Ruth Wood Open Arms House, reaffirming our commitment to hospice patients in this community. The house provides a home-like setting for hospice patients and a fee system based on ability to pay.

Kaweah Health provides more than just healthcare services to this community — we also provide economic stability. **Each year, we infuse \$1.12 billion into the local economy**, according to a recent study by Impact DataSource of Austin, Texas. And while we do receive operating tax revenue each year from local residents, it represents only two tenths of one percent of our annual budget — not even enough to run our healthcare system for one day. Each year, Kaweah Health creates an estimated \$973 million in annual economic impact, and represents 3.3% of the total economic output of Tulare County. As the largest employer in Tulare County, we drive an estimated \$513.3 million in earnings, \$420.8 million of which is spent in our local economy.

In the year ahead, we know there will be financial challenges as we join the 53 percent of U.S. hospitals who are expected to lose money, according to a new report prepared by Kaufman Hall for the American Hospital Association. We’ve budgeted for the first operating loss in our organization’s history – an estimated \$11.2 million – as we continue to struggle with unprecedented labor costs and high rates of inflation. This means we’ll need your support. There is excellent care available locally, and we hope you’ll choose it. Your support will help us continue to improve the health of our community and our economy. Our community can rest comfortably knowing the quality and safety of care provided at Kaweah Health will never be diminished while we confront these challenges.

Mission | Vision | Pillars

Our Mission

**Health is our passion.
Excellence is our focus.
Compassion is our promise.**

Our mission statement articulates Kaweah Health's fundamental purpose both within our organization and for our community.

Our Vision

To be your world-class healthcare choice, for life.

Our vision statement is what we aspire to be for our community and sets the future path and framework in our strategic planning.

Our Pillars

In order to achieve our mission and vision, Kaweah Health must:

- Achieve outstanding community health
- Deliver excellent service
- Provide an ideal work environment
- Empower through education
- Maintain financial strength



Income

For every dollar spent on Kaweah Health's operating costs for fiscal year 2021-22, less than two tenths of a penny was covered by tax revenue.



Right: Kaweah Health Care District Consolidated Information Fiscal year ended June 30, 2022

One year's operating expenses represented by one dollar



INCOME SOURCES AS PERCENTAGES OF COST OF OPERATIONS*

- Patients and insurance companies 24.94%
- Medicare and Medicare Managed Care 36.70%
- Medi-Cal and Medi-Cal Managed Care 30.52%
- Federal stimulus funding 2.13%
- Other health related services including Foundation fundraising, and investment income 7.68%
- Property tax revenue used for operations 0.19%
- Property tax revenue used to pay general obligation bond principal and interest 0.43%

Where our income came from:

Patients and insurance companies	\$ 217,258,243
Medicare and Medicare Managed Care	319,670,745
Medi-Cal and Medi-Cal Managed Care	265,866,259
Less: Patient Payments Not Received/ Written Off to Charity Care	(22,578,150)
Federal stimulus funding	18,548,037
Other health related services including Foundation fundraising, and investment income	66,930,068
Property tax revenue used for operations	1,616,501
Property tax revenue used to pay general obligation bond principal and interest	3,702,671
Total income	\$ 871,014,374

Where it went:

Salaries and benefits	417,003,388
Paid to others who provide goods and services for patient care	433,192,617
Depreciation (funds set aside for future capital purchases)	37,432,657
Interest paid on borrowed funds	8,953,787
Principal debt repayments	9,691,000
Capital purchases (equipment, building, improvements, etc.)	7,512,305
Total expenditures	\$ 913,785,754
Funds used from cash reserves	\$ (42,771,379)

2021-2022 Highlights

Healthgrades Quality Outcomes Awards



Stroke care



Cardiac care



Critical care



Gastrointestinal care



For a complete list of official recognitions and awards visit KaweahHealth.org/Awards.

Pulmonary (lung) care



What is Healthgrades?

Healthgrades evaluates hospital quality for conditions and procedures based solely on clinical outcomes. Their purpose is to help consumers understand and compare hospital performance to support their care choices.

Healthgrades America's Best Hospitals™ consistently exhibit exceptional, comprehensive quality care based on clinical quality outcomes for 31 conditions and procedures. America's 250 Best Hospitals™ are in the top 5% in the nation for overall clinical excellence for the current year.

New and Upcoming

New

- Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship added to Graduate Medical Education program
- Free vaccination event held at Kaweah Health Tulare Clinic
- Grief services offered to first through sixth grade children in Visalia by Kaweah Health Hospice
- Cardiothoracic clinic opened in downtown Visalia
- Telehealth program upgraded through federal grant program
- Graduate Medical Education residency programs welcomed 51 new resident physicians.
- Graduate Medical Education program graduated 42 resident physicians.
- Twenty-four-hour facility for youth in mental health crisis created through partnership with Tulare County Health and Human Services
- Ruth Wood Open Arms House reopened.
- SafeGait 360° Balance and Mobility Trainer,® with longest track in the US installed at Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital

Upcoming

- Ten urologists from USC Urology to provide services at Kaweah Health Specialty Clinic
- Kaweah Health School of Nursing partnership with Unitek Learning to help reduce the nursing shortage in California
- Kaweah Health Tulare Clinic to add more specialty services
- Children's bereavement program, CUBS, to offer emotional support to children who have lost a loved one
- Stanford University cardiac surgeons to join Kaweah Health Cardiothoracic Surgery Clinic
- Second TrueBeam® radiotherapy system and Brainlab imaging software to be available at Sequoia Regional Cancer Center
- Third CT scanner to be added at Kaweah Health Medical Center
- New outpatient psychiatric clinic to open
- New outpatient clinic to open in Visalia Industrial Park



The Kaweah Health School of Nursing is being established to address the urgent demand for nurses.

Our Impact on the Community

Kaweah Health manages

Employees

2114	Support staff
1850	Nurses
490	Med staff members
422	Volunteers
128	GME resident physicians
70	Guild members
56	Hospitalists
30	ED physicians
22	Anesthesiologists
12	Chaplains
3	GME fellows

Other

22,581	Hours volunteered
4,614	Babies delivered
639	Licensed beds
\$5.7 M	Contributed by foundation

In fiscal year 2021-2022, Kaweah Health performed

Services

3,458,753	Total chemistry tests
1,648,778	Hematology tests
40,631	Covid tests
621,096	Other tests
5,769,258	Total Lab tests
81,555	ED visits
33,219	Hemodialysis treatments
9,566	Surgeries
1,454	Sleep studies in-lab
1,284	Coronary stents
965	Heart catheterizations
632	Vascular surgeries
393	Open-heart surgeries
317	Neurosurgeries
272	Helipad flights
128	Implanted defibrillator pacemakers



8,078
TOTAL JOBS SUPPORTED



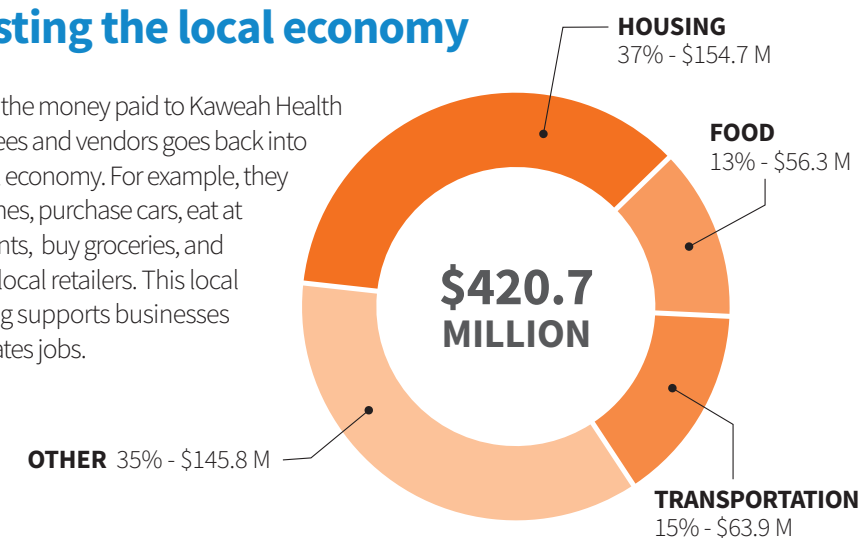
\$513.3
MILLION IN HOUSEHOLD EARNINGS



\$69.1
MILLION FROM NEW PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT

Boosting the local economy

Much of the money paid to Kaweah Health employees and vendors goes back into the local economy. For example, they buy homes, purchase cars, eat at restaurants, buy groceries, and shop at local retailers. This local spending supports businesses and creates jobs.



Economic analysis prepared by Impact DataSource, Austin, TX

Little things. Huge rewards.



Keeping our patients safe from infection is a top priority at Kaweah Health. For us, excellent doctors and leading-edge technology are just a start. We also focus on the little things — things that deliver huge rewards. Hand washing, strict protocols for hygiene, and comprehensive training lead to better outcomes for our

patients. We are committed to providing excellent care. Every hour. Every day. We congratulate our doctors, nurses, staff, and board for their never-ending dedication to patient safety. An A grade during this historically challenging time in healthcare is a testament to their vigilance, expertise, and hard work.

The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade is an elite designation from The Leapfrog Group, a national, independent watchdog organization that sets the highest patient safety standards in the United States.



400 W. Mineral King Avenue
Visalia, CA 93291
(559) 624-2000

Visit [KawahHealth.org/Awards](https://www.kawahhealth.org/awards)



Caring For Our Caregivers

A chance to honor those who care for a career

When one door closes, another opens. This is especially true for the Kaweah Health Foundation. Foundation staff closed the books on the Modernization Campaign in July, having raised more than \$1.9 million for vital equipment used at the main hospital and other campuses, but they did not stop there. With unanimous community board approval, the Foundation jumped right into its next campaign — Modernization 2.0. — which will focus on what staff members need to make their work lives happier and healthier.

“We know that staff have had a rough few years,” says Foundation Director Liz Wynn. “We want to let them know we don’t take them or their sacrifices for granted.”

And so, Modernization 2.0 is subtitled Caring for Our Caregivers and focuses on improving their work sites at the Downtown, Court Street, and Akers Street campuses, plus the Lindsay, Woodlake, and Exeter Rural Clinics. The goal is to raise \$1.8 million by June 2024, with work being done throughout the campaign as needed funds are raised.

One of the first things staff requested was a quiet place to get away from the activity of the hospital or their work environment. Nurses also requested a monument and surrounding area where they could reflect on their work and its challenges and remember those they lost and those who healed and made it back home. With that in mind, the Kaweah Health Marketing Department created two monument designs, along with beautiful inscriptions to celebrate humanity and strength.



Concept for art installation


Once approved, the full-size monument will be installed at the main hospital, along with smaller versions at Court Street and Akers Street.

These monuments will be places to find peace and quiet when days have been long and difficult. Surrounded by benches and plants, the sites will be accessible to patients and visitors, too, when they need a break

or fresh air. The hope is that these monuments will serve as an inspiration to the dedicated staff, who have found amazing inner reserves during the last few years.

Staff members also requested some updates to areas the public does not often see, such as employee and physician break rooms, locker rooms, and lounges. They noted that some break rooms are small or awkwardly laid out and need a new coat of paint and new fixtures to match the building. “We know that our amazing nurses and staff do their best work when they feel rested and happy, so we are pleased to help update and refresh the spaces behind the scenes,” Wynn says.

Kaweah Health’s growth has also created the need for new spaces. Tens of thousands of people are treated every year, and the staff need to be taken care of — more than 5,200 people work at Kaweah Health. The hospital has come a long way over the decades, and it is time to make the facilities match the efforts of staff. These upgrades will ensure all Kaweah Health employees have the working environment they deserve.

Kaweah Health employee donors will also help fund a large part of the campaign through the employee giving program, which allows staff members to donate directly from their paychecks. Other funding will come from the Foundation board’s outreach efforts, using social media or personal connections to reach donors. In addition, the Foundation offers a donor recognition plan for donors of \$15,000 or more, which gives naming rights to everything from an exam room to an entire hospital wing (\$2 million). 

To learn more about Modernization 2.0, watch a video or donate, visit [KawahHealth.org/FoundationCares](https://www.kawahhealth.org/foundationcares)

Contact the Foundation at Foundation@KawahHealth.org or (559) 624-2359 to learn about naming rights and other giving methods.

Dialysis patient Efren Canizalez receives his treatment with the help of Registered Nurse Rochelle Garcia.



An Open Door to All

Dialysis clinic is open to all who need help.

On any given day, Kaweah Health Dialysis Center helps more than 50 people experiencing kidney failure and requiring dialysis treatment. In the largest hospital-based dialysis facility in the South Valley, the compassionate staff offer a full range of treatment and also provide outreach and counseling to meet the special needs of dialysis patients. The size of the facility helps make a big impact in Visalia. Director of Renal Services at Kaweah Health Amy Baker, MSN, RN sees the difference, "We have more nurses and techs, renal dieticians, an

on-site pharmacist, and more – all committed to helping our patients. We really go above and beyond for them. We can also take patients that other clinics will refuse, like patients who can't get out of bed. We can absolutely accommodate them." There are many conditions that can lead to kidney failure. The kidneys have a vital job of removing waste from the body and maintaining correct chemical balances. As kidneys begin to fail, they don't filter blood and fluids the way they should. When they only function at 10 to 15 percent

of normal, patients may need dialysis or a kidney transplant to stay alive. Unfortunately, kidney failure is usually permanent, and a person cannot survive without properly functioning kidneys. However, with dialysis, patients can continue to live long, fulfilling lives, and people with kidney failure can remain active and continue to do the things they love.

KAWEAH HEALTH | MORE THAN MEDICINE. LIFE.



Nephrology Social Worker Rocio Zavala (left) and Licensed Clinical Social Worker Minnie Aceves provide many services to the patients at Kaweah Health Dialysis Center.

“ We are basically here to help our patients in any way possible. We want them to have problem-free treatment and live their lives as fully as possible. ”

Minerva “Minnie” Aceves
Kaweah Health
Dialysis Center, Licensed Clinical
Social Worker

What exactly is dialysis?

Dialysis is a treatment for kidney failure that removes waste and extra fluid from the blood using a filter. There are two methods for dialysis, hemodialysis (HD) and peritoneal dialysis (PD), both of which are offered at Kaweah Health Dialysis Center.

Hemodialysis removes blood from the body, filters it through a machine, and returns the cleaned blood to the

body. Peritoneal dialysis uses a patient's peritoneum, a natural membrane in the abdomen, to filter wastes. Through meeting with their nephrologist and discussing care options, patients decide whether HD or PD is right for them.

About 45 employees make up the Kaweah Health Dialysis Center team of caregivers, which includes nephrology nurses, hemodialysis technicians,

social workers, dietitians, a pharmacist, and support staff. It's a diverse group of skilled workers charged with caring for people in need of life-sustaining treatment.

You might be surprised to find social workers in a medical facility such as a dialysis clinic, but it is actually required by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to have a masters-level social worker at all dialysis clinics. At the Kaweah Health Dialysis Center, Licensed Clinical Social Worker Minerva “Minnie” Aceves and Nephrology Social Worker

Rocio Zavala work with approximately 140 dialysis patients on a regular basis. They know all of the patients by name and understand each unique situation; however, their days are far from routine. “There's no typical day for us,” says Minnie. “We are basically here to help our patients in any way possible. We want them to have problem-free treatment and live their lives as fully as possible.”

“ I kept asking Mark, ‘Are you sure about this?’ But he never hesitated. He gave me more time on this earth. ”

Phillip Sonoqui
On friend and coworker Mark
Morris' living kidney donation

One special area the social workers facilitate is helping patients find and receive kidney transplants.



Kidney transplant patient Phillip Sonoqui (left) and his donor Mark Morris are all smiles after a successful transplant surgery at University of California San Francisco Medical Center.

VITAL SIGNS | FALL EDITION 2022




Some of the staff members at Kaweah Health Dialysis Center
 Front, L-R: Skylean Witzel, Coleen Moriarity-Suggs, Claudette Licea, Minnie Aceves, Rocio Zavala, Namee See, Molly Saetern, Rochelle Garcia, Ruth Camacho. Back, L-R: Ronald Malone, Nicole Berry, Brian De Roca, Nicole Rhodes, Jessica Parra, Allison Morales, Jennifer Dresp

Since there is no cure for kidney failure, some patients use dialysis with the ultimate goal of getting a kidney transplant. But it's not a quick solution. Currently, it's estimated there are more than 100,000 people in the U.S. waiting for a donor kidney, and the wait time is long. In California, it can take up to 10 years or longer for a deceased donor kidney to become available. Living donations can happen in as soon as six months to one year, but they are much less common. Despite the challenges to patients of long waiting lists and kidney availability, Kaweah Health is proud of the team at the dialysis center who work hard to keep patients healthy and help find kidney transplants for multiple patients each year. While most clinics help one or two patients find kidney transplants each year, Kaweah Health helped four patients in 2021, and six

in 2020 find suitable donors and receive transplants. Visalia local Phillip Sonoqui started experiencing a sudden decline in his health and was soon diagnosed with end-stage kidney failure. He started coming to Kaweah Health Dialysis Center immediately and met with Minnie and Rocio, who started him on the path to getting a transplant. "When Phillip first came here, we explained everything and encouraged him to consider a transplant because that's the only cure for kidney failure," Minnie says. "As a father to a young daughter, he was determined to get a transplant and reached out to his personal network of family and friends."

Mark Morris is Phillip's friend and coworker of 35 years, and as soon as he heard, he thought of Phillip's 9-year-old daughter and didn't even hesitate. Mark was tested and later

determined to be a match. After that, Minnie and Rocio went to work helping Phillip navigate the detailed process of moving a patient toward a final transplant date. It can take months to compile medical exams, complete lists of documents, and nudge the process if it slows down. After 10 months, everything was in place, and Mark became a living donor to Phillip at UCSF Medical Center in San Francisco. Mark doesn't consider himself a hero, but Phillip and his family can't thank him enough, "I kept asking Mark, 'Are you sure about this?' But he never hesitated. He gave me more time on this earth." 

Join the Valley Renal Support Group every second Wednesday from 7 PM – 8 PM
 To sign up, email Doris.Lew@Kidney.org
 Facebook Kidney Patient Support Group
[Facebook.com/ValleyRenalSupport.org](https://www.facebook.com/ValleyRenalSupport.org)



Mark's living kidney donation saved his friend Phillip's life.



Because there's no place like home.

When facing the challenges of advanced age, illness, or surgery, there's no place like your own bed and a familiar space.

Kaweah Health Private Home Care provides extra help, with home care plans tailored to meet your specific needs. Our personal-care aides and homemakers are trained and educated to provide expert and compassionate private home care.

Services are flexible, available in 4-hour blocks up to 24 hours a day. We can also put you in touch with valuable community resources.

We offer

- Personal care
- Alzheimer's and dementia care
- Medication management
- Meal preparation
- Light housekeeping
- Exercise programs
- Walking assistance
- Companionship
- Incontinence care
- Recovery care
- End-of-life comfort care

Terms and payment for services

There is no requirement for length of care. The service is private pay, billed weekly, and not covered by Medicare or Medi-Cal. Our experienced staff can answer your questions regarding long-term care insurance policies.

To learn more, call (559) 624-2854 between 7:30 AM and 4:30 PM, or visit [KaweahHealth.org/PrivateHomeCare](https://www.KaweahHealth.org/PrivateHomeCare).



VISIT: [KaweahHealth.org/PrivateHomeCare](https://www.KaweahHealth.org/PrivateHomeCare)

Keeping Care Close to Home

Neonatal unit is giving all babies a chance.



New mother Jasmyn Galindo and son Elijah spend a final day in the Kaweah Health NICU.

The trip to Kaweah Health's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) takes you up the elevator to the sixth floor of the Acequia Wing and into the wide halls and quiet spaces where an amazing team of professionals work together to care for premature or sick babies.

Moving through the unit is at once calming. Only the gentle beeping of equipment and hushed voices of the nurses rise above the quiet. A brief look down the hallway reveals rooms equipped with modern, high-tech equipment and busy staff moving with a focused determination. Posted near the monitor at a nurse's desk is a small note that reads, "Keep calm and believe in your baby," a reminder of

the challenges this staff rises to meet every day. And while the NICU is an impressive facility with the best equipment and technology around, it is clearly the compassionate and experienced staff that make this team so special.

Jasmyn Galindo was 25 weeks pregnant with her first child and getting ready for bed when she felt a strong pain in her abdomen. "You feel a lot of strange things when you're pregnant, but I knew something was wrong," she says. Jasmyn checked into Kaweah Health Medical Center that night, her water breaking right as she arrived. After spending eight days there, she gave birth to her son Elijah at 26 weeks. Elijah was tiny, weighing

just under two pounds. The NICU team checked him in and began preparing him for his journey home. Over the next two months, Jasmyn stayed with Elijah day and night, only leaving to shower and change clothes. Each private patient room includes space and furniture for moms and family members to comfortably spend the night.

On this day, she has a lot to be thankful for – Elijah, now 5 pounds, 4 ounces, just passed his car seat test, and is clear to go home the next day. "It's been an amazing experience," she says with a big smile. "The whole staff, everyone who came to talk to me while I was here, was so kind and compassionate. The doctor explained

everything and answered all of my questions. I learned a lot about how to care for my baby too."

On this last day in the NICU, Jasmyn feeds Elijah a bottle and spends some time holding him and being close. Encouraging messages and mementos of milestones decorate a small whiteboard near the long couch where she slept all those days. Elijah's caring staff have put personal messages in a colorful children's book for him, a small congratulations from all who touched his life during his time here.

There are many team members here, all of whom are all committed to providing the best care possible for our smallest patients. In the Kaweah Health NICU you will find a group of specialized caregivers who all play an important part in getting babies home:

Neonatologists. Kaweah Health's neonatologists are physician specialists from Valley Children's Hospital who work full-time at Kaweah Health. A neonatologist is trained specifically to handle the most complex and high-risk situations facing newborns.

Pediatric hospitalists. Kaweah Health's pediatric hospitalists are also physician specialists from Valley Children's Hospital who work full-time at Kaweah Health. A pediatric hospitalist is a pediatrician who specializes in caring for children while they are in the hospital. This doctor works with your child's regular pediatrician while your child is in the hospital and helps with follow-up care.

Neonatal nurses. A neonatal nurse, or NICU nurse, is a registered nurse with specialized training in the care of newborn infants. NICU nurses have gained experience working with neonatal patients and often have become certified in a related area. They care for some of the most fragile patients at Kaweah Health, sick and premature newborns.

Social workers. There are two licensed clinical social workers in the NICU who collaborate with the health care team, helping patients and families understand and cope with the emotional and social issues that sometimes come with early births or




and well organized, and our NICU team is focused on excellence throughout.

The Kaweah Health NICU is led by Felicia Vaughn, who has worked at Kaweah Health for almost 28 years, 22 of them in the NICU. It is clear from her commitment of more than two decades that the NICU is an incredibly meaningful department to work in. "The birth story is so important to every individual person," Felicia says. "It's a unique area to work in because you get to participate in people's joy. It's so rewarding to be out in the community when someone comes up to you and says, 'Oh! You helped deliver our baby,' or 'You did my baby's first bath!' They truly remember you forever."

One of the greatest benefits offered in the NICU is a quiet, private space for parents to eat, sleep, or even spend the night so they can be close to their baby. "We love that our parents can stay here and be close to their babies," Felicia says. "Parents are so much more at ease when they know they can be right there just a few steps away."

An ongoing collaboration with Valley Children's Hospital for the last five years has allowed more babies to stay in the community for their care. "The best thing we can do is keep them here, close to their families," Felicia explains. "Through the partnership, we have five neonatologists from Valley Children's who help care for them and keep them at Kaweah Health. If there are babies who need surgery or an even higher level of pediatric specialty care, they are transferred to Valley Children's. It's been a huge benefit to our parents in the community."

Prior to the partnership, any baby that was less than 29-weeks gestation automatically went to Valley Children's Hospital. For local parents like Jasmyn, the benefit is huge. Instead of a 100-mile round trip to Valley Children's, baby Elijah was only minutes away. "Being here with him through everything made things so much easier," she says. "I can't imagine anything else." 

“
Being here with him through everything made things so much easier. I can't imagine anything else.

“
Jasmyn Galindo
Elijah's mom

seriously ill babies. They also identify community resources that will best meet the needs of the patient and family following discharge.

Therapists and specialists. You will find a number of staff working with babies and educating parents including physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech and language specialists. Each one helps evaluate different aspects of a baby's health as they grow.

Unit secretaries, nurse aides, and volunteers. It takes a lot of support to keep everything running



The Kaweah Health Ruth Wood Open Arms House reopened July 29, 2022.

Open Hearts, Open Arms

Kaweah Health Ruth Wood Open Arms House is helping families with end-of-life care.

Kaweah Health is excited to announce the re-opening of Ruth Wood Open Arms House on July 29, 2022. To help announce the opening of this live-in facility, members of the community and press were invited to tour the house via a media event on June 28, 2022.

The facility originally opened in 2016 and was dedicated to Ruth Wood, a supporter of hospice for many years and a founder of Hospice of Tulare County in the mid-1980s. In 2021, the operators of the facility approached Kaweah Health Hospice leadership in hopes of transferring ownership but still keeping its services available to the community.

With all parties working together for the good of the hospice patients that benefit from this valuable service, ownership of the house was transferred to Kaweah Health that year. To continue to honor Wood's work and legacy, her name remains on the home during this new phase under Kaweah Health's leadership.

The mission of Kaweah Health Ruth Wood Opens Arms House is to provide a home for end-of-life care for the community, where every life matters, and no one dies alone. The compassionate team provides care and education that positively transforms the way people view and experience terminal illness.



Ruth Wood was a supporter of hospice for many years and a founder of Hospice of Tulare County in the mid-1980s.



Above: Staff members Alyssa Perez (left) and Jacklyn Becerra help keep a home-like atmosphere for all of the residents at the house. Below: The house has a comfortable common area for families to relax.

High-quality hospice care is essential for residents nearing the end of life's journey. The Ruth Wood Opens Arms House strives to promote and deliver specialty-level hospice care for all.

Residents who come to the house receive 24-hour supervision and personal care by staff and are supported by the Kaweah Health Hospice team of nurses, social workers, spiritual counselors, and home health aides. The team provides end-of-life care that emphasizes compassion, independence, respect, and dignity for residents and their loved ones. Community volunteers also play a part on the team by greeting visitors, preparing meals, providing companionship, and supporting the residents and families.

Kaweah Health's Director of Home Health, Hospice, and Home Care Services Tiffany Bullock emphasizes the facility's uniqueness in the area, "There is no other home like this in the Central Valley. We have the ability to accept six residents and provide 24-hour-a-day care to help ensure that they have the best comfort and peace during their end of life."

Nurse Manager Debbe Salazar and Supervisor Jacklyn Becerra oversee daily operations of the house. Debbe recognizes the community need that the Open Arms House fulfills, "Over the last several years, we've had so many families come to us who need someplace to go, and not having that was very hard. Now we can help them."

“
It's really a testament to Kaweah Health's mission to provide excellence and compassion. This house is going to enable us to continue that mission even for the most vulnerable of our community.
”

Dr. Ryan Howard
 Kaweah Health Hospice
 and Palliative Care Services
 Medical Director

The addition of the Kaweah Health Ruth Wood Open Arms would not have been possible without the support of the Kaweah Health Hospice Foundation, which shares the commitment of Kaweah Health Hospice in providing a compassionate home for end-of-life care. Through this partnership, both organizations are honored to continue serving the community in such a meaningful way. [WH](#)

If you are interested in learning more or would like to volunteer for Kaweah Health Hospice or Kaweah Health Ruth Wood Open Arms House, please call (559) 733-0642.

If you would like to donate to the Kaweah Health Ruth Wood Open Arms House, please visit [KawahHealth.org/OpenArmsHouse](https://www.kawahhealth.org/OpenArmsHouse).

To donate by mail, make checks payable to Kaweah Health Hospice Foundation 216 S. Johnson Street Visalia, CA 93291.

Changing Rural Health

Specialty health clinic in Tulare is making a positive impact on residents.

The Kaweah Health Tulare Health Clinic opened its doors in early 2021 to a world shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic. A steady flow of patients quickly grew, and visitation to the new clinic surged soon after it began offering COVID-19 testing. Within a few months, patients from the Tulare area began coming and taking advantage of the increased access to care in one of the most clinically-underserved counties in California. In 2019, County Health Rankings and Roadmaps reported that Tulare County averaged one primary care physician for every 2,350 people, one of the lowest rankings in the Central Valley.

The new clinic is a warm, inviting space with a comfortable waiting area and friendly staff to greet visitors. Primary and walk-in care are available to patients from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and there is an on-site lab for patients who need testing. All patients are welcome, regardless of their insurance coverage.

With its convenient location and many available services, the Kaweah Health Tulare Health Clinic has quickly become a busy center serving the community's health.

The clinic includes 20 exam rooms, three behavioral health rooms, and a beautiful, modern design. Patients first enter a front area where they are screened for vitals and then exit to a back area where nurses take them to an examination or procedure room to see physicians and advanced practice providers.

The clinic performs many common outpatient procedures like the removal of lesions, moles, and ingrown toenails, and there are pediatric services such as physicals and vaccines. A convenient lab inside the clinic can test patients and get results in 20 minutes for a variety of tests including hemoglobin, A1C, strep, urinalysis, hematocrit, glucose, COVID-19, and the flu. A pharmacist is also at the clinic to provide medication management for patients.

One of the great benefits of the clinic is that patients can schedule specialty appointments during their primary care visit. Specialty services include endocrinology, orthopedics, podiatry, and vascular surgery, with rheumatology, ear-nose-and-throat, and colorectal services coming soon. For South Valley residents with Medi-Cal coverage, many of these specialty services are only available

through the Kaweah Health Rural Health Clinic network. The Tulare clinic serves as a remote office where specialists can consult with local patients and schedule follow-up procedures at Kaweah Health Medical Center or other locations. Prior to the Tulare clinic, patients had to be referred out of town for specialty services.

Getting complete care for patients is always a priority. To achieve that, community care coordinators at Kaweah Health clinic locations work as a team with the patient and the care providers to not only address the medical needs of patients, but also their social, mental, and behavioral health needs. Three rooms in the clinic are dedicated to therapy, psychiatry, and eventually, child

psychiatry, scheduled to begin this winter. Licensed clinical social workers and associate clinical social workers will serve the community's behavioral health needs.

The Tulare Health Clinic team includes patient access specialists, medical assistants, licensed vocational nurses, nurse practitioners, doctors, and specialists. The clinic is led by Rogelio Fernandez, MD, who practices family medicine here and also serves as the clinic's medical director. Dr. Fernandez is a respected physician in the community who has spent more than 30 years caring for people in the Central Valley. The clinic also has four very experienced nurse practitioners in Kristina Komar, Padma Nayak, Dan Allain, and Lucy Barber. Services will continue to grow

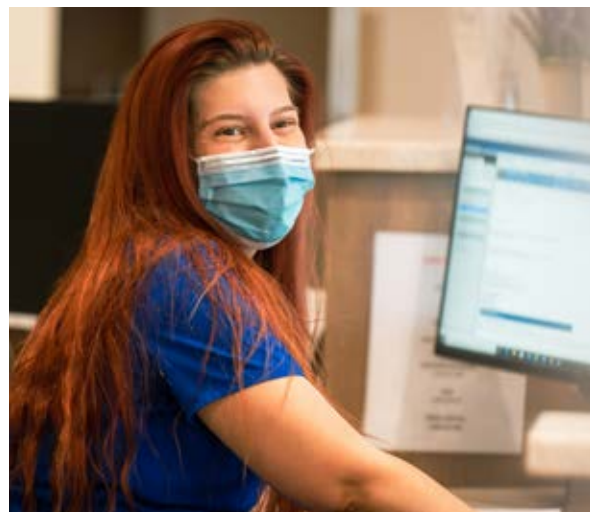
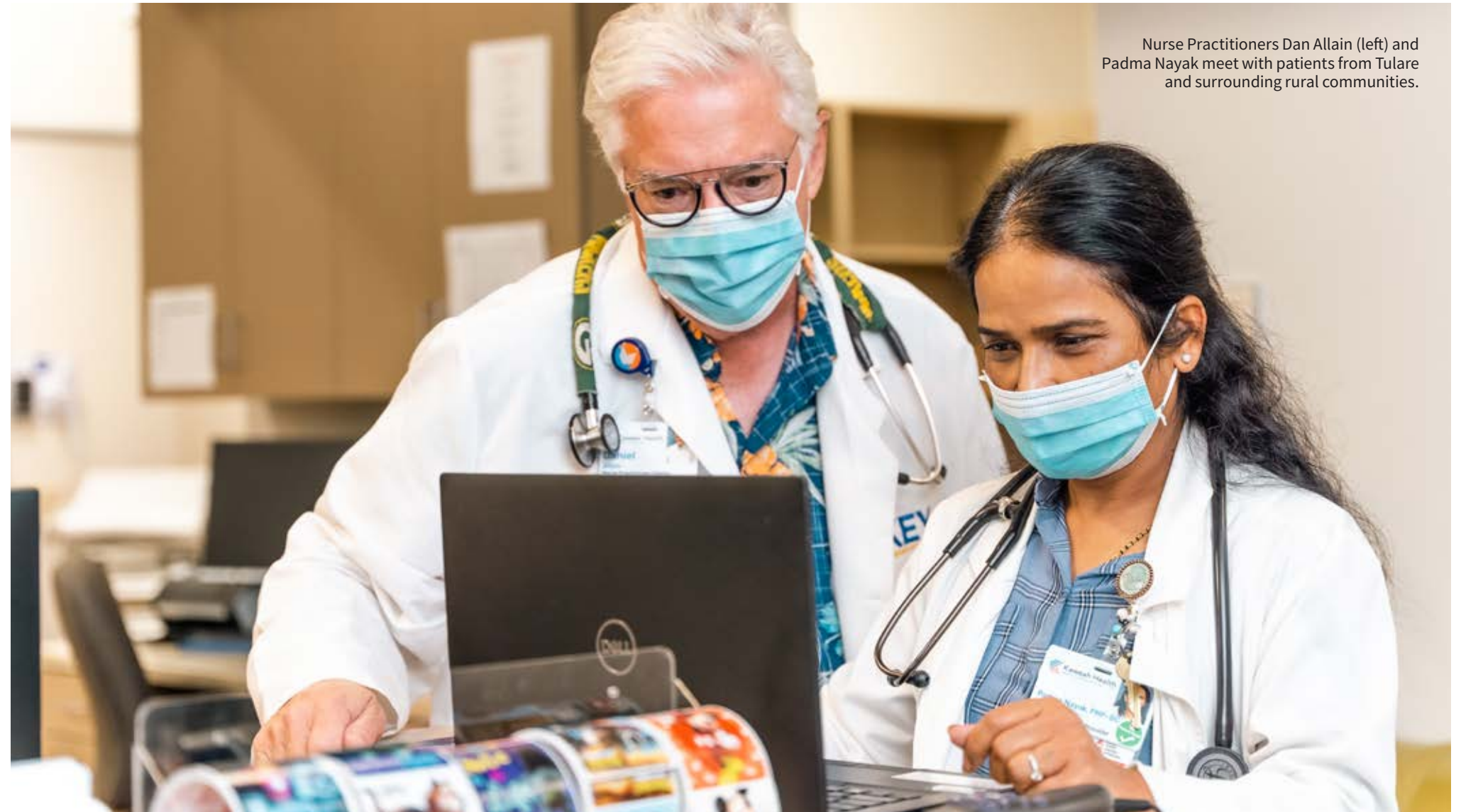
in the future with more community physicians bringing primary care, walk-in, and specialty physician services to the people of Tulare and the surrounding rural area.

For primary and specialty services, the clinic is accepting new patients with all forms of insurance coverage, including Medicare and Medi-Cal.

Tulare Health Clinic Practice Manager Miriam Garcia says the clinic has been a big step in bringing high-quality, affordable health care to Tulare. "The Tulare clinic is already making a huge difference in helping people here stay healthy," she says.

Nurse Practitioner Dan Allain shares how the clinic helps Tulare residents and the outlying rural communities learn more about preventative care, "Having clinics like

Nurse Practitioners Dan Allain (left) and Padma Nayak meet with patients from Tulare and surrounding rural communities.



Tulare Health Clinic Patient Access Specialist Adrianna Thompson greets patients.



Care.

For some, it's an emotion.
For us, it's a career.

It takes a special person to work for Kaweah Health. We serve a region where the challenges are unique and the needs are great. But for us, the greater the need, the greater the reward.

Kaweah Health clinical and support staff are part of an organization that delivers a better quality of life for some, and a second chance at it for many. Every day, our employees have the satisfaction of knowing that they are making a difference in the lives of individuals and their community.

If you want to use your talents alongside people who face each day with courage and purpose, in an environment that empowers you to do your absolute best, this is where you belong.

Care. For some, it's an emotion. We put it into action every day. If you really want to make a difference, visit KaweahHealth.org/Careers.



f |  |  |  VISIT: KaweahHealth.org/Careers

