

Vital Signs

A photograph of a woman with short dark hair, wearing a bright pink top, smiling warmly at the camera. She is surrounded by several hands of various skin tones, which are reaching in from the edges of the frame to form a heart shape around her. The background is dark and out of focus.

**Alicia
Rodriguez**
Surrounded
by Support

Vital Signs

Vital Signs
is a publication of
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LETTER FROM THE CEO

Breast Cancer Awareness Month is a meaningful reminder that early detection, timely treatment, and compassionate support can make a profound difference for all cancer patients and their families. At Kaweah Health, we are committed to providing exceptional care close to home, from preventive screenings and diagnosis through treatment, recovery, and every step that follows.

We also want to recognize the physicians, nurses, imaging specialists, nurse educators, nurse navigators, technicians, and support staff who care for people facing any kind of cancer diagnosis. Their expertise is essential, but so is the compassion they bring to every interaction. A clear explanation, a reassuring conversation, or simply knowing that trusted care is available nearby can make an uncertain time feel more manageable.

That same commitment to patient-centered care guides the growth taking place throughout Kaweah Health. I am pleased to welcome Jewel Calub, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, CPXP, as our new Chief Nursing Officer. Jewel joins us from Orlando, Florida, and brings extensive clinical, operational, and executive nursing leadership experience, along with a strong record of building high-performing teams and advancing quality, safety, clinical outcomes, and the patient experience. Look to learn more about Jewel in the months to come.

We have also expanded our long-term subacute program at the Court Street facility to meet an important community need. This phased expansion will increase our capacity from 32 to 54 long-term subacute patients, allowing us to serve more individuals who require around-the-clock specialized care. It is an important investment in patients and families who depend on this level of support close to home.

Our 2027 fiscal year also represents a historic milestone for Kaweah Health. For the first time ever, our organization has budgeted more than \$1 billion in operating revenue. This reflects the scope of the services we provide, the number of patients who rely on us for quality, compassionate care, and the important role Kaweah Health and our employees play throughout Tulare and Kings counties.

This financial strength enables us to continue investing in the care our community deserves. It supports the expansion of advanced services, including new cardiac procedures that allow patients to receive life-saving care locally rather than traveling to Fresno or Bakersfield. These new options reflect the skill and dedication of our physicians, nurses, technicians, and support staff.

At the end of the day, every new leader, service, and investment has the same purpose: ensuring our community has access to outstanding care, close to home, delivered with genuine compassion. During Breast Cancer Awareness Month and throughout the year, we are honored to serve this community and build a healthier, stronger future together.



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Chief Executive Officer
of Kaweah Health

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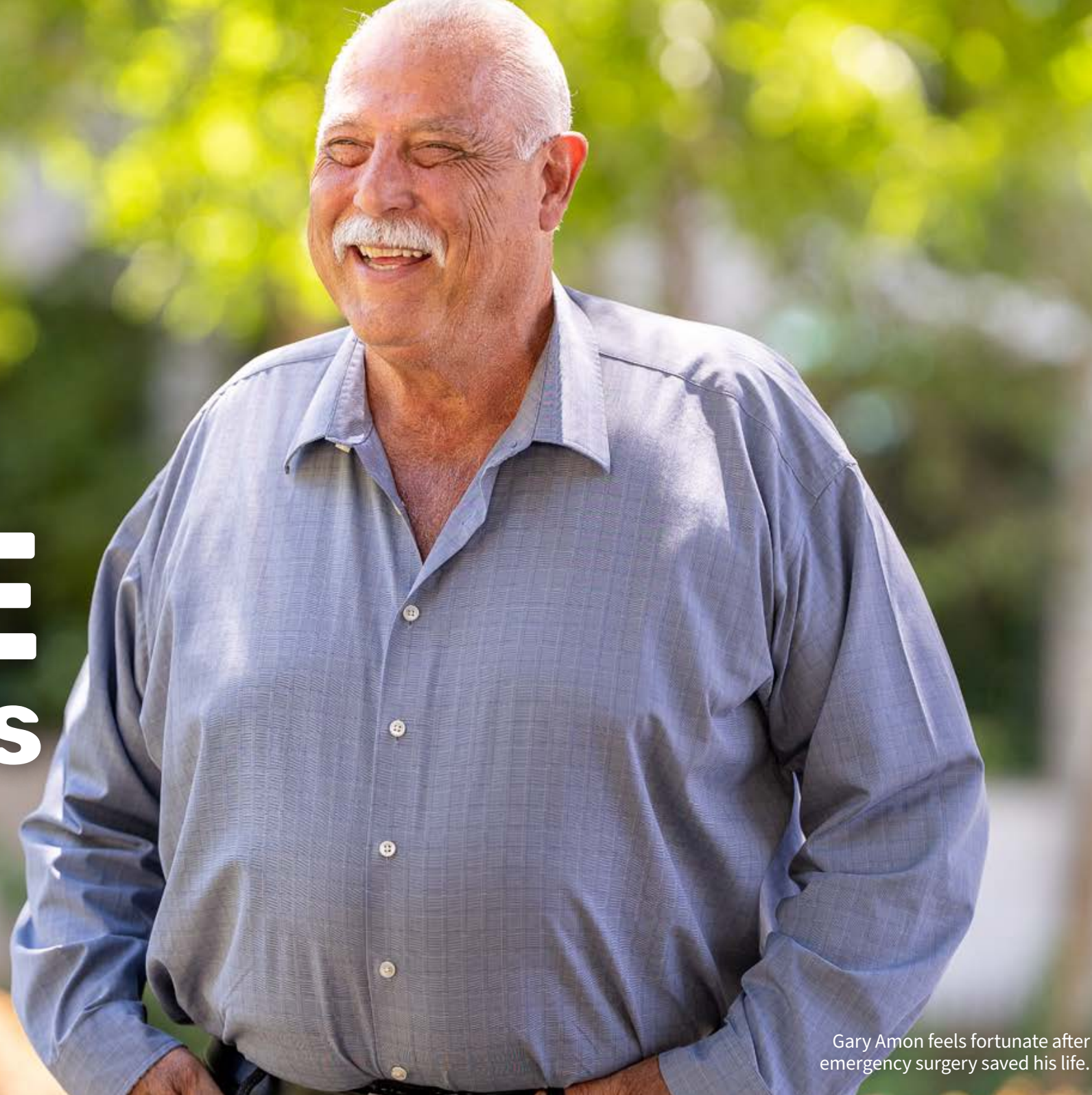
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TIME Matters

Gary Amon's fast action helped save his life.



Gary Amon feels fortunate after emergency surgery saved his life.

The pain in Gary Amon's stomach came on without any warning. In just 10 minutes it was unbearable and he was driving himself to the Kaweah Health Emergency Department.

"By the time I arrived, the pain had intensified to the point that it was difficult to get out of my car and walk into the ED," says Gary, owner of Central

Valley Business Forms. "I had a hole in my stomach and Dr. Arjun Chandrasekaran told me I needed emergency surgery immediately. It was a matter of life and death."

At that point Gary says he signed the paperwork and the next thing he remembers is waking up in the Intensive Care Unit the next day. He

had a breathing tube down his throat, another tube through his nose, a wound Vacuum-Assisted Closure (VAC), drainage tubes from his abdomen, and a 7-inch long incision.

Gary was suffering from acute duodenal perforation, which is a hole in the small intestine that spills stomach acid, digestive juices, and bacteria into the

abdomen. When that happens, there is a high risk of sepsis. Sepsis is a life-threatening emergency that happens when your body's response to an infection damages vital organs and, often, causes death. Like strokes or heart attacks, sepsis is a medical emergency that requires rapid diagnosis and treatment.

The fast action of Dr. Chandrasekaran, a general surgeon, and the emergency department

team in recognizing and treating Gary's condition kept him from anything more serious.

"Once the bowel wall is compromised the clock starts against severe infection," Dr. Chandrasekaran says. "Without immediate treatment, the progression to sepsis is almost universal."

After surgery, all those drainage tubes and the wound VAC were essential in keeping Gary safe from infection. A wound VAC uses negative pressure to continuously clear fluid from the surgical site, reduce swelling, help close the wound, and promote healthy tissue growth.

"Realizing how close I had come to losing my life made me feel incredibly fortunate," Gary says. "I truly believe I was in the right place, Kaweah Health, at the right time."

Gary's story didn't end after surgery. He spent three weeks in the hospital, first in the ICU, then in the Medical-Surgical Unit. From the hospital, he went to Kaweah Health's Rehabilitation Hospital for another week. After that, he continued to receive care from Kaweah Health Home Care nurses who would visit him twice per week to change his wound dressing and manage his wound VAC.

Taking care of his wound once out of the hospital was vitally important. Along with the nurse visits to his home, Gary also went to the Kaweah Health Wound Center weekly where they monitored that he was healing correctly. Finally, once Gary's wound had healed sufficiently, he ended his care with outpatient rehabilitation three times per week for a couple of months.

Gary's case is an extreme instance where the danger of developing sepsis is clear. However, sepsis can start with just an ordinary infection, says Jared Cauthen, RN, sepsis coordinator on Kaweah Health's Quality and Patient Safety Team.

Warning signs to watch out for include feeling confused or having a hard time staying awake, trouble breathing or breathing very fast, a fast heartbeat,



— “

Gary's quick decision-making gave us the window we needed to save his life.

— ”

— Dr. Arjun Chandrasekaran
General surgeon



Avoiding sepsis means Gary has more time to travel with his wife, Donna. From left: Dubai, Thailand, and Munich.

a fever or a body temperature that’s too low, feeling very weak or very sick, peeing much less than normal, feeling dizzy or fainting, skin that looks pale, feels cold and damp, or has blotchy patches, and pain from the infection that keeps getting worse.

“You don’t have to know it’s sepsis. You don’t need to use Google or ChatGPT to diagnose yourself,” Jared says. “What you do need to recognize is that an infection plus a significant change in how you look, feel, or function warrants urgent medical evaluation.”

For Gary, listening to his body and making the decision to head straight to the emergency department saved his life.

“Gary gave us the window we needed to control the contamination and intervene before irreversible complications set in,” Dr. Chandrasekaran says. “His quick decision-making directly contributed to his positive outcome.”

Gary says he is happy he had Kaweah Health. Even though he has been a member of the Kaweah Health Foundation for more than 25 years, he was still

surprised at how many teams helped with his care.

“Before this experience, I never imagined I would depend on Kaweah Health to the extent that I did,” Gary says. “Every step of my journey, from the ED, ICU, Medical-Surgical Unit, Rehab Hospital, Home Care, and outpatient rehabilitation, was marked by professionalism, compassion, and exceptional medical care. I am deeply grateful for the outstanding healthcare we have right here in our community.”

With SEPSIS, it’s about time.

T

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M

E

TEMPERATURE
higher or lower
than normal

INFECTION
signs or symptoms
of an infection

MENTAL DECLINE
confused, sleepy,
difficult to rouse

EXTREMELY ILL
severe pain, discomfort,
shortness of breath

Gold Standard Stroke Care

Stroke program delivers faster diagnosis, specialized expertise, and national recognition.

When a stroke occurs, fast action can make a life-changing difference. At Kaweah Health, a growing network of clinical expertise, technology, and evidence-based practices is helping ensure patients in Tulare County can receive timely stroke care close to home.

Since 2018, Kaweah Health has held Primary Stroke Center certification backed by The Joint Commission’s Gold Seal of Approval for Advanced Primary Stroke Center Accreditation, and that record of excellence has now grown to include two new recognitions from the American Heart Association: the Get With The Guidelines Stroke Gold Plus quality achievement award, recognizing care aligned with nationally recognized, research-based stroke treatment guidelines, and the Target Stroke Honor Roll Elite award, given for meeting rigorous benchmarks that reduce the time between an eligible patient’s arrival and treatment with clot-busting therapy.

Together, the awards reflect a sustained focus on coordinated, high-quality care starting from the moment a patient enters the emergency department. That care has been further strengthened by Kaweah Health’s TeleStroke program, launched in January 2026 in partnership with TeleSpecialists, a physician-led telemedicine provider. Through the program, a board-certified stroke specialist joins the Kaweah Health care team virtually at the patient’s bedside within three minutes of arrival, supporting rapid evaluation and time-sensitive treatment decisions in a region where access to specialty neurological care has historically been limited by geography.

“The addition of the TeleStroke program has significantly enhanced our ability to respond rapidly and effectively to stroke emergencies

throughout Tulare County,” said Dr. Richard Pantera, board-certified neurologist. The around-the-clock support has strengthened collaboration among emergency, inpatient, and specialty teams, improved access to neurological expertise and helped streamline stroke evaluation and treatment.

Stroke occurs when blood flow to part of the brain is blocked or a blood vessel ruptures, depriving brain tissue of oxygen. Because brain cells begin to die quickly, early recognition and emergency treatment are critical to improving survival and reducing disability.

American Heart Association

STROKE

2026 GOLD PLUS

TARGET: STROKE HONOR ROLL ELITE

TARGET: TYPE 2 DIABETES HONOR ROLL

GET WITH THE GUIDELINES

With the TeleStroke program, a stroke expert joins the care team virtually at the patient’s bedside within three minutes of arrival to provide time-sensitive treatment.



Casting a New Line

Physical therapy and a groundbreaking device helped Phil Guerra reclaim his life after a stroke.

After a stroke in 2017, Phil Guerra lost movement on the left side of his body. Being left-hand dominant, this meant having to relearn how to do things with his right hand. He came to Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital, where occupational therapist Monica Moore helped him regain strength and movement.

With Monica's help and over time, he was able to regain the ability to wash and dress himself, and even drive, but he still relied heavily on his right side for his daily living.

In 2025, as Phil progressed in his rehab, Monica recommended Phil look into Vivistim®. "I didn't know anything about it," he said, "but after my daughter and

I did more research on it, I decided it was the right choice for me."

Vivistim® is an FDA-approved device implanted under the skin by a neurosurgeon, and is specifically designed for adults with chronic, moderate-to-severe arm and hand weakness resulting from an ischemic stroke, when a blood clot blocks an artery that brings blood and oxygen to the brain. When paired with occupational therapy, it sends gentle signals to the brain that can help improve hand and arm movement after a stroke.

"People who qualify for Vivistim® also need to commit to Vivistim Therapy™," Monica said. "That means 90-minute therapy sessions three times per week

for six weeks, plus exercises at home. After working with Phil during his recovery, I knew he was committed to put in the work, and therefore a great candidate."

Phil traveled to the Bay Area for the Vivistim® implant. After the procedure, he returned to Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital outpatient clinic to continue therapy with Monica. With paired therapy and dedication to his home program, he regained more function on the left side of his body, especially his arm and hand.

"I could fish again with both hands," Phil said. "I'm left-handed, so after my stroke it was hard to enjoy fishing with

just my right hand. Being able to do that again meant a lot."

Before the Vivistim®, Phil's left arm inclusion in his activities of daily living was around 25 percent, but it has increased to 50-75 percent after getting Vivistim® and occupational therapy, according to Monica.

"Best of all, the device is now a part of him, and he can continue to use it up to four hours per day to stimulate his brain and thus his whole body for more and more function," she says.

Kaweah Health has the only rehabilitation hospital in the Central Valley that offers Vivistim Therapy™.



From left, Phil Guerra works with Monica Moore, occupational therapist, on using his left hand. Phil practices fine motor skills. Phil is happy on his last day of therapy. Phil has his left-hand back and his ability to fish.



"I've been an occupational therapist for 38 years," Monica said. "It's rewarding to see stroke survivors make progress. Vivistim® gives qualifying stroke patients hope and the means to breach plateaus and to keep improving, but it's also the hard work they put into therapy that helps them reach their goals."

Kaweah Health is working to bring the Vivistim® implant procedure to Visalia in the future. Until then, stroke survivors who have received, or are considering, the device can contact Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital for an evaluation to learn if this specialized therapy may be right for them. KH



KaweahHealth.org/StrokeRehab

Please Join Us

KAWEAH HEALTH FOUNDATION PRESENTS

Twinkle & Toast



Friday
December 4, 2026

5:30 PM • Wyndham Hotel • Visalia CA

*Join us for a special evening of dinner,
dancing, and a Christmas tree auction.*

*All proceeds benefit
Kaweah Health initiatives.*



KaweahHealth.org/Twinkle



500 Hearts Strong

Minimally invasive
procedure gives hope
to more than 500 Central
Valley patients.

Dr. Harleen Chahil, interventional
cardiologist, talks to the media.

For more than 500 patients across the Central Valley, a failing heart valve no longer meant open-heart surgery. It meant a short procedure, a one-night stay, and a return to the life they thought heart disease had taken from them.

That milestone — Kaweah Health's 500th Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement, or TAVR — was reached recently by structural cardiologist Dr. Harleen Chahil.

"It represents 500 patients whose lives we have impacted, whose quality of life we have improved," Dr. Chahil says. "It is a testament to our program and the patients and referring physicians who have placed trust in it."

The procedure itself is remarkable in its simplicity. A physician threads a thin tube through a blood vessel, typically

starting near the leg, up to the heart. Once it reaches the old, stiffened aortic valve, a new one expands into place and begins working immediately — no incision through the chest, no stopped heart. Kaweah Health has offered TAVR since 2018, giving patients a minimally invasive option with a much quicker road back to their everyday life.

Dr. Shelly Bansal, cardiothoracic surgeon and medical director of Kaweah Health's Cardiothoracic Surgery Program, sees the number as more than a statistic. She says it represents 500 real people who have been helped.

The stakes are significant for this region. Central Valley residents face elevated rates of type 2 diabetes, obesity, smoking, and poor air quality, all factors that put extra strain on the heart. That's part of why Kaweah

Health has continued building out its cardiac program, adding minimally invasive procedures like MitraClip™ therapy, the Micra™ leadless pacemaker, and WATCHMAN.

"We are really rounding out our ability to offer comprehensive heart care here locally," Dr. Chahil says. **KH**

If you are concerned about your heart health, you can make an appointment directly, no referral is needed. Visit **KaweahHealth.org/TAVR** to schedule your appointment with one of our cardiologists today.



Surrounded By Support

Alicia Rodriguez found support not just from her family, but also from her Kaweah Health coworkers and care team.

Alicia Rodriguez found the lump in her breast on Nov. 17, 2025. She remembers the date well because it was the anniversary of her mother's death and she was taking a shower after having been to visit the cemetery with family earlier that day.

"I was in the shower and a voice just told me to check my breast," Alicia says. "I had just had my mammogram in March, so it would have been another four months before I had another one."

Thankfully that shower check helped her discover her triple-negative breast cancer early. Triple-negative breast cancer is very aggressive and grows fast.

Once she noticed the lump, as a part of Kaweah Health's patient access services team, she knew she needed to act fast. First, she went to her primary care physician for a referral to the Kaweah Health Imaging and Breast Center where she had another mammogram and a biopsy. That is where Alicia met Cecilia Fleming, RN, Kaweah Health Breast Center nurse educator.

"She held my hand. When you get the diagnosis, you are in shell shock, having that person to help you understand what is happening is so important," Alicia says.

Cecilia says her job is to walk patients through the process and to advocate for them.

"I try to be as transparent as possible, letting patients know everything that is about to happen," Cecilia says. "I give all my patients my direct line and tell them to call me, even if it is 2 a.m. They can leave a message when they have those questions running through their head at 2 o'clock in the morning and then I will find the answers for them."



Alicia says that even though she was trying to be brave in the beginning, Cecilia was there to give her permission to cry.

After the results from her biopsy came back, Alicia then started treatment at the Kaweah Health Sequoia Regional Cancer Center.

Dr. Amitoj Gill, a medical oncologist, got her started on chemotherapy right

away. Chemotherapy is a type of cancer treatment that uses powerful drugs to kill the cancer cells and stop them from growing. Alicia had chemotherapy once per week for 18 weeks.

Then in June, Dr. Kyle Potts performed a lumpectomy, a surgery that removes just the lump and preserves the rest of the breast. In September she finished radiation treatment with Dr. David Ly, a radiation oncologist. Radiation treatment aims to destroy any cancer cells that may be remaining and lower the risk of the cancer returning. Alicia had daily radiation treatments for six weeks.

While all those treatments have gone well and Alicia has a promising prognosis, it still took a lot out of her. She says she would not have been able to face cancer if it hadn't been for the support from her family and her coworkers.

"I have the best husband. He has been like a rock for me," she says.

Her four sons, ranging in age from 10 to 27, were also very understanding. Especially when mom, who was always the one in charge of the household, needed to take a break.

Although Alicia could have gone on leave from work, she says the positive energy from her coworkers was what



Above: Alicia Rodriguez, Kaweah Health revenue cycle manager, center with headscarf, poses with the Patient Access Services Team. These coworkers supported Alicia throughout her cancer journey.

Inset: Alicia and her husband, Art, at her first chemotherapy appointment.

Opposite: Alicia surrounded by her husband and sons.



she really needed to keep her going. She only took five weeks off when she had her lumpectomy.

"They made me want to come to work instead of wallow away in my pitiful bed," Alicia says. "We have a whole wall of photos in my office. We took a new photo after every chemotherapy session."

Her coworkers organized meal trains so she wouldn't have to worry about dinner on the days she had chemotherapy. They made sure she had treats, like lip balm and comfy socks, or that she had saltine crackers when she was feeling nauseated.

"They would pick me up from my house and drive me to work on days when I didn't feel safe to drive. They came to my house to have lunch with me when I was on leave," Alicia says. "I know how lucky I am to have huge support at home, at work and from my care team."

Alicia’s coworker Maritza Yanez said the team didn’t think twice about rallying around Alicia.

“We are all women in the office, and I think we all just related to her,” Maritza says.

Coworker Cynthia Brito says it was important for the team to just be there for Alicia.

“The days she wanted to cry, we let her cry,” Cynthia says. “When she lost her hair, we all cried with her. She is so strong that sometimes we forgot all that she was going through.”

With all the treatment behind her, Alicia wants to make sure other women know to check themselves regularly and not wait for the next mammogram. She says that had she waited four months for that next mammogram she could have been facing a very different prognosis.

“I feel so lucky that I’m here,” Alicia says. “I want to get the word out, I want people to know it is really great that I never had to leave Visalia, Kaweah Health had everything I needed.”

Through it all, Alicia says this has been both the worst and best year of her life.

“It has been the worst because of my diagnosis and the treatment I had to endure,” Alicia says. “But the best because of the bonds and relationships I’ve formed at home and at work.” 



Above: Cecilia Fleming, RN, Kaweah Health Breast Center nurse educator, was an important part of Alicia’s cancer journey. Below left: Alicia, holding flowers, with Dr. Amitoj Gill and her medical oncology team. Below right: Alicia with her radiation therapists, who helped her through her final cancer treatments.



Know Your Lemons

Kaweah Health has partnered with nonprofit Know Your Lemons®, an internationally-recognized breast health charity, dedicated to empowering individuals around the world with life-saving breast cancer education. Know Your Lemons has an app that guides you through self-examination and general education about your breasts.

Each woman is different, however, it is recommended you begin getting regular mammograms at age 40. Your family history and other factors might suggest a different screening plan, so you should always check with your primary physician.

Doing self-exams before 40 or in between mammograms is a great way to become familiar with your breasts so you know when something changes, says Cecilia Fleming, RN, Kaweah Health Breast Center nurse educator. She adds that the app will remind you when it is time for your self-exam.



For more information visit KaweahHealth.org/Lemons.



Pink Events

Join the Kaweah Health Foundation at the following events in October benefiting the Kaweah Health Breast Center.

- October 10** – Think Pink, Visalia Mall
- October 10** – Pink Night Out, Exeter Memorial Hall
- October 14** – Girls and Guitars, Visalia Fox Theater
- October 16** – Coffee for a Cure, The Human Bean, all three Visalia locations

For more information on all these events visit KaweahHealth.org/Foundation.

How Cancer is Treated

When someone is diagnosed with cancer, their care team often includes specialists from two related fields: medical oncology and radiation oncology. At Kaweah Health Sequoia Regional Cancer Center, patients have access to both, without needing to travel outside the South Valley, with locations in both Visalia and Hanford.

Both medicine and radiation are effective ways to treat cancer, and cancer doctors, called oncologists, specialize in helping cure patients with cancer. Medical oncologists treat cancer with medication. The most well-known cancer-treatment medicine is chemotherapy, but there are other types like targeted therapy and immunotherapy, which are designed to work with the body’s own systems to identify and fight cancer cells. A medical oncologist typically manages a patient’s overall

treatment plan, monitors how the body responds over time, and coordinates with the other specialists involved in a patient’s care, including surgeons and radiation oncologists.

Radiation oncologists treat cancer using high-energy beams to target and damage cancer cells directly. Treatment planning is highly individualized: radiation oncologists work with a care team to design a plan based on the specific type, location, and stage of the cancer. The goal is to treat the tumor as precisely as possible while limiting exposure to surrounding healthy tissue and organs. Radiation therapy may be used on its own, before or after surgery, or alongside chemotherapy.

“Many patients need both medical and radiation treatments, sometimes at the same time,” says Dr. David Ly, radiation

oncologist at Kaweah Health Sequoia Regional Cancer Center. “Having both teams in one place means we can coordinate care without delays between appointments or facilities.”

Kaweah Health Sequoia Regional Cancer Center offers both radiation oncology and medical oncology services in Visalia and Hanford.

In Visalia
4945 West Cypress Avenue, Visalia, CA 93277

Medical Oncology: (559) 624-3000
Radiation Oncology: (559) 624-3100

In Hanford:
Medical Oncology: (559) 584-6000
857 Garner Avenue, Hanford, CA 93230
Radiation Oncology: (559) 585-7115
1443 West 7th Street, Hanford, CA 93230

Back on Track

Brian Albertoni is back to work and working out after spinal fusion relieved decades of pain.

Brian Albertoni had so much pain on a flight back from New Zealand for work, he thought he was going to have to retire early and end his career.

“I had to sit on the edge of my seat with my back straight up for the whole flight,” Brian, 62, says recalling that 2025 flight. “After that, I could not have made another international trip.”

Brian, who works for World Wide Sires and travels internationally constantly, had already had two back surgeries in late 2024 in Los Angeles. He had struggled with pain for decades after he ruptured a disc in his back in an agricultural accident in his 20s. The pain he had tolerated off and on since then was getting worse in 2024 and he knew he had to do something.

“I had my doctor recommend someone in LA,” Brian says. “That doctor did a microdiscectomy in November and then another one in December.”

A microdiscectomy is a minimally invasive back surgery used to relieve nerve pain caused by a herniated disc, which removes a portion of the disc pressing on a nerve. While that can solve back problems, Brian needed something else, says Dr. Mathias Daniels, an orthopedic surgeon who specializes in spine surgery.

“If a patient still has issues after a care plan is in place, I always recommend getting a second opinion,” Dr. Daniels says. “A large part of my practice is taking care of people who have received care elsewhere, so I’m well versed in revision spine surgery.”

Brian admits that he might not have followed all the rules after his November surgery, however he did everything by

the book after his December surgery. His pain only got worse. It was so bad he was unable to go to Kaweah Health Lifestyle Fitness Center for his daily workouts, which he says is a big part of keeping himself mentally fit.

“At that point I was so depressed and in pain. I was at my lowest of the low,” Brian says.

Then he ran into a friend from the gym who informed him that Kaweah Health had just earned national recognition from US News & World Report two years in a row for its spine surgery and urged him to give Dr. Daniels a call.

Dr. Daniels suggested a different approach and did a spinal fusion, a surgery that permanently joins together two or more bones in the spine so there is no movement between them. Brian had that surgery in July 2025.

After the surgery, Brian went straight to Kaweah Health’s rehabilitation hospital.

“I started occupational therapy on day two and then added in physical therapy. The five days there were incredibly valuable,” Brian says.

He is now free of the back pain he had tolerated since he was in his 20s and is back at the gym. International flights are easier, too, and retirement is no longer on his mind.

Dr. Daniels says results like Brian’s are why he loves what he does.

“Positive outcomes are the focus of everything I do. It’s quite rewarding to see my patients get back to participating in a full, active life,” Dr. Daniels says.

For Brian, he is so happy he made the call to Dr. Daniels.

“Everyone at Kaweah Health was so caring I felt like I had the very best care I could get and it was right here,” Brian says. **KH**



For more information on Kaweah Health’s nationally recognized spinal surgery program visit **KaweahHealth.org/Fusion**.



Above: Brian Albertoni is happy to be back to working out at the Kaweah Health Lifestyle Fitness Center after spinal fusion ended decades of pain. He says his daily workouts help with his mental health as much as his physical health.

Opposite: Brian at a dairy. He travels all over the world for his job, and back pain had him considering an early retirement before he met with Dr. Mathias Daniels.





Making Great Strides

Dr. Jun Kim, an orthopedic surgeon, center, and his specialized surgical team performed Kaweah Health's first Mako robotic surgery on July 22, 2026.

Surgical robotics and advanced techniques help knee replacement patients recover faster than ever.

Kaweah Health orthopedic surgeon Dr. Jun Kim debuted the organization's new Stryker Mako SmartRobotics™ system performing the inaugural surgery with it in July, pairing the robot with the Jiffy Knee™ surgical technique for knee replacement patients.

The Mako system uses 3D CT-based planning to give surgeons a detailed view of each patient's anatomy before the procedure begins. Paired with the Jiffy Knee method — which avoids cutting through tendons and muscle — the approach is designed to ease recovery for knee replacement patients.

"Before, I would have to cut the tendons and the quadricep muscle, which was more painful and took longer

to heal," Dr. Kim said. "With the Jiffy Knee method, I'm able to move those aside to have access to the area, which makes recovery much easier."

Patients who undergo the Jiffy Knee technique typically regain range of motion and perform a straight leg raise sooner than patients who undergo traditional knee replacement surgery.

"I'm excited that we've launched the Mako program at Kaweah Health," Dr. Kim says. "My ability to do the Jiffy Knee with the Mako is better for my patients."

The Mako robot expands Kaweah Health's surgical robotics program, which supports less invasive procedures across multiple specialties. In

addition to knee surgery, the system is designed to assist with hip, shoulder, and spine procedures, according to Jag Batth, Kaweah Health's chief operating officer.

The addition reflects Kaweah Health's ongoing investment in surgical technology for Central Valley patients, bringing advanced orthopedic care closer to home. **KH**



For more information on Kaweah Health's robotic surgery program visit **KaweahHealth.org/Mako**.

Introducing

Kaweah Health is excited to welcome Dr. Anuj Varshney, board-certified orthopedic surgeon



Dr. Anuj Varshney
Board-certified orthopedic surgeon

Kaweah Health is pleased to welcome Orthopedic Surgeon Anuj Varshney, MD, to Kaweah Health Medical Clinic – Akers.

Dr. Varshney brings more than 20 years of specialized training and practice, much of it here in the Central Valley. His deep commitment to making advanced spine care accessible to all is the main reason he chose to build his practice in this community.

He has practiced in the Central Valley for the last decade and is fluent in Spanish, allowing him to better serve the diverse patient population.

Dr. Varshney is board-certified by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgery and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons. He earned a bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering and his medical degree from Northwestern University, followed by his residency at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit and a fellowship in spine surgery at the University of Washington, Harborview.

"The Honors Program at Northwestern shaped not just my technical skills, but my philosophy of patient care," Dr. Varshney said. "Engineering taught me precision; medicine taught me compassion."

Dr. Varshney believes surgery should only be recommended when it offers the best opportunity for meaningful, lasting improvement. He combines a conservative, patient-centered approach with advanced minimally invasive, robotic, and motion-preserving spine techniques to help patients get back to doing what they love.

Learn more about Dr. Varshney and other orthopedic surgeons at Kaweah Health at **KaweahHealth.org/Ortho**.

Advancing Cardiac Care



From left: Dr. Trung Tran, Dr. Shelly Bansal, Katherine Herr, Dr. Harleen Chahil, Dr. Sarmad Said, and Marc Mertz were all featured in "Advancing Cardiac Care in the Central Valley."

For more than 30 years, Kaweah Health has provided heart surgery to patients across the South Valley. Now, it's looking ahead.

Recently, the cardiac team was featured on a CBS47 special "Advancing Cardiac Care in the Central Valley." The conversation brought together Kaweah Health leaders and physicians to discuss the future of cardiac care and the continued growth of specialized services in the South Valley.

- **Marc Mertz**, Kaweah Health Chief Executive Officer
- **Dr. Shelly Bansal**, Cardiac and Thoracic Surgeon, Director of Cardiothoracic Surgery Program
- **Dr. Trung Tran**, Cardiac and Thoracic Surgeon
- **Dr. Harleen Chahil**, Interventional Cardiologist
- **Dr. Sarmad Said**, Cardiologist

Their perspectives offer a fuller picture of what patients and families can expect, helping our community better understand the care and treatment options available close to home. Watch the special at **KaweahHealth.org/Roundtable**.

Urgent Care 7 days a week

Check the line:
KaweahHealth.org/UrgentCare

COURT STREET

1633 S. Court St. • Visalia

Daily: 9 AM – 9 PM

Holiday hours may vary

(559) 624-6090

DEMAREE

3600 W. Flagstaff Ave. • Visalia

Daily: 8 AM – 8 PM

Closed major holidays

(559) 624-6800

Use Urgent Care for
injuries or illnesses that
are not life-threatening
such as colds, flus,
broken bones, minor
cuts, and fevers.



Expanding Compassionate Care

Kaweah Health expands its long-term subacute care facility



Jag Batth, Kaweah Health chief operating officer, speaks to Kaweah Health leadership and board members during a tour of the expanded subacute care facility on Court Street.

For families with a loved one who depends on a ventilator or feeding tube just to survive, the difference between a 20-minute drive and a two-hour one can be the difference between seeing them every day and seeing them almost never.

That's the gap Kaweah Health is working to close as it expands its long-term subacute care facility on Court Street in Visalia, bringing back skilled nursing beds that were shuttered in December 2022, when the pandemic's financial toll forced the health system to make one of its most painful decisions.

"Having to turn away 22 skilled nursing patients was one of the hardest decisions we had to make to get back on our feet financially after the pandemic," said Jag Batth, Kaweah Health's chief operating officer.

Nearly four years later, that decision is being reversed, bed by bed.

The facility currently cares for 32 long-term subacute patients, the kind of round-the-clock, high-acuity care reserved for people who need permanent medical support like ventilators or artificial feeding devices. On July 1, 2026, eight newly licensed subacute beds opened, with 14 more expected to follow within the year. Once complete, the expansion will bring Kaweah Health's capacity to 54 long-term subacute patients, restoring the 22 beds lost after the pandemic.

For many Central Valley families, that number represents something harder to quantify than a bed count: proximity. Long-term subacute care is a narrow specialty, and facilities offering it are

scarce. Families often end up driving more than an hour each way just to visit a parent, spouse, or child.

"This is one more way we are focusing on compassionate care for our patients and their families," Batth says. "We don't want families to face the hardship of long commutes to see each other."

That's the calculation behind reopening this wing of the Court Street facility rather than expanding elsewhere: keeping patients who need the most intensive, sustained care within reach of the people who love them. 



The Kaweah Health Foundation Annual Golf Classic

on August 7, 2026, was a tremendous success, and we want to acknowledge the support from many community friends, special business associates, and the Kaweah Health family. The tournament netted more than \$130,000 to benefit the Foundation's Tiny Feet, Big Steps Campaign — a \$3.1 million initiative dedicated to advancing care for our youngest to adult patients. Thanks to the generosity of friends like you, we have raised nearly two-thirds of our goal. In Pediatrics, these improvements, along with our valued partnership with Valley Children's Medical Group, ensure children can continue to receive life-saving treatment close to their families, reducing the added stress of travel. In the Surgical Short Stay Unit, the expansion will allow less-complex surgeries to be treated more efficiently, without the restriction of bed space. Patients in pain need treatment fast, and the addition and renovation will help achieve this.

The Kaweah Health Foundation 39th Annual Golf Classic will be held August 6, 2027. Tournament proceeds will continue to support the Tiny Feet, Big Steps campaign.



THANK YOU

to our Title, Platinum, and Hole-in-One sponsors!



ALSO THANK YOU

to our Gold, Contests, Silver, Tee/Green, Cart, Prime location, Contests, and Prize sponsors!

THANK YOU 2026 GOLF CLASSIC COMMITTEE MEMBERS!

All participants and volunteers!

Classes

Prepared Childbirth Classes

\$35, registration includes participant and one support person.

Second Wednesday of the month

6:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Kaweah Health Multiservices Center
402 W. Acequia Ave., Visalia, CA 93291
Register: KaweahHealth.org/Classes

Breastfeeding Class Classes held monthly

Free, registration includes participant and one support person.

Wednesday, October 21

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Kaweah Health Acequia Wing
Mother-Baby Classroom, 3rd floor
305 W. Acequia Ave., Visalia, CA 93291
Register: KaweahHealth.org/Classes

Cancer Related Lymphedema Class

Thursday, October 1 and Thursday, December 3

3:45 to 4:45 p.m.
Kaweah Health Sequoia Regional
Cancer Center
Maynard and Pauline Fought
Conference Room
4945 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia, CA 93277
Register: vcarvaja@kaweahhealth.org

Check website for future dates.

Support Groups

Grief Support Groups

First Tuesday of the month
10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Quail Park at Shannon Ranch
3440 W. Flagstaff Ave., Visalia, CA 93291

First Tuesday of the month

2:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Radiant Church
515 E. Center Ave., Visalia, CA 93292

Second Tuesday of the month

10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Quail Park on Cypress
4520 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia, CA 93277

First Wednesday of the month

10:00 to 11:00 a.m.
Radiant Church
432 E. Pleasant Ave., Tulare, CA 93274

Diabetes Among Friends Support Groups

Take place monthly March – October

First Monday of the month

5:30 to 7:00 p.m. – English
Visalia Senior Center
310 N. Locust St., Visalia, CA, 93291

Second Thursday of the month

10:00 to 11:30 a.m. – English
Tulare Senior Citizens Center
201 N. F Street, Tulare CA, 93274

Second Thursday of the month

5:30 to 7:00 p.m. (English/Spanish)
Dinuba Parenting Network
597 N. Alta Ave., Dinuba, CA, 93618

Tuesday Cancer Support Group

For newly diagnosed patients and/or cancer patients in treatment and their loved ones.

Meets weekly — Every Tuesday

10:00 to 11:00 a.m.
Kaweah Health
Sequoia Regional Cancer Center
Resource room
4945 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia, CA, 93277

Visalia Walk with a Doc

Second Saturday of the month Year round

8:00 to 9:15 a.m.
Blain Park
3101 S. Court St., Visalia, CA, 93277

Healthy Lindsay – Healthy Community

Wellness Support Groups

Monthly March – October

Lindsay groups and walk only for Lindsay residents.

Third Tuesday of the month

10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (English)
Lindsay Senior Center
911 N. Parkside
Lindsay, CA, 93247

Fourth Thursday of the month

5:30 to 7:30 p.m. – Spanish
Lindsay Family Resource Center
400 E. Hermosa, Lindsay, CA, 93247

Lindsay Community Walk

Workshops and presentations on the following topics: Diabetes, Healthy Living Workshops, Stroke Prevention, Colon Cancer and assistance connecting to resources.

Fourth Saturday of the month

7:30 to 8:30 a.m.
Lindsay City Park
850 N. Elmwood Ave.
Lindsay, CA, 93247

To schedule a presentation or to learn more about our community outreach health education programs call (559) 624-2520 or (559) 624-2416.

Dates are subject to change due to holidays or enrollment. For the latest schedule, visit KaweahHealth.org/Events.

A romantic couple, a man and a woman, are seen from behind, embracing each other in a vast, golden field. They are both wearing cowboy hats. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, orange glow and lens flare effects. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds.

More moments like these.

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 keys to beating breast cancer.

If you're a woman over 40, schedule a mammogram. 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

