

Vital Signs



Taking Health to Heart

A heart-healthy diet is rich in fruits and vegetables

Vital Signs

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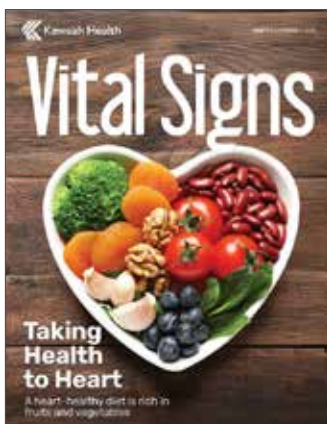
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LETTER FROM THE CEO

A new winter season marks another chapter of growth at Kaweah Health. I am happy to report we continue to make significant strides in enhancing healthcare services for our local community with the recruitment of new physicians and the recent opening of an innovative rehabilitation facility.

To help better meet the needs of our community, we have worked hard to recruit new physicians to Visalia and the Central Valley, focusing on bringing in caregivers who will enhance our services and the quality of care our patients receive. You can read about these new doctors on page 16.

Regardless of where we recruit physicians to work — at the medical center or one of Kaweah Health’s clinics, or for private medical groups in our community — our focus is on finding the right fit for each physician and ensuring patients have the best possible access to care.

In addition to welcoming these new physicians, I’m excited to announce Healthgrades has named Kaweah Health Medical Center as one of America’s 100 Best Spine Surgery™ hospitals. More than 4,500 hospitals were evaluated nationwide, and Kaweah Health was one of 21 California hospitals chosen. We’re extremely humbled by the recognition and grateful for the selfless healthcare heroes and orthopedic surgeons and neurosurgeons we partner with who make Kaweah Health a world-class organization.

We are also pleased to announce Kaweah Health has been recognized as a High Performing Maternity Care Hospital in the 2025 U.S. News & World Report rankings, distinguishing ourselves among hundreds of hospitals nationwide. As we continue to grow our maternity care, we welcome Dr. Holly Quinn, an obstetrician and gynecologist who joins us in our effort to maintain and expand obstetric services in the South Valley.

I am also happy to announce the recent opening of our new mobility training course at Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital. You can read more about this amazing new resource on page 22.

In a significant victory for healthcare providers across California, Proposition 35 was voted into law, establishing new requirements for how the state must allocate Managed Care Organization (MCO) tax revenues. The new law requires the state to direct MCO tax funds primarily toward increasing Medi-Cal payments for doctors, hospitals, and other healthcare providers. Previously, these funds were often diverted to help balance the state’s general budget, despite their original intended purpose of supporting Medi-Cal providers. We are excited to see this new, guaranteed funding stream that should improve access to care for millions of low-income Californians who rely on Medi-Cal for their healthcare needs.

As we continue to enhance our services and expand our team of caregivers, we remain dedicated to our mission of providing excellent, compassionate care for the people of Tulare and Kings counties. Thank you for your trust and support in helping Kaweah Health grow and thrive.



Gary Herbst

Chief Executive Officer of
Kaweah Health

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▶ The ExcelsiusGPS aids Dr. Daniels in screw placement and decreases radiation exposure for both patients and staff.

Pinpoint Accuracy

Utilizing technology for a quicker recovery



▶ Dr. Daniels and his team, L-R: Graciela Perez Gallardo, surgical tech, Christina Campos-Meraz, RN, Tim Irving, RN, Dr. Daniels, and Chelsea Collins, surgical tech.



Progressing Kaweah Health's vision to be world-class, orthopedic spinal surgeon Mathias Daniels, MD is making sure he has the best technology to make spinal surgery more accurate and safer for both his patients and his team. Recently, the hospital purchased an ExcelsiusGPS system that helps him navigate around a patient's spine and place screws without having to make a large incision.

Dr. Daniels often performs spinal fusion, a surgery that permanently joins together two or more bones in the spine so there is no movement between them. These bones are called vertebrae. The goal is to stop painful motion or to strengthen the spine.

This equipment, produced by Globus Medical, will reduce the length of a spinal surgery, and also limit radiation exposure for the patient and the

medical team. All CT scans take place prior to the surgery and are uploaded to the ExcelsiusGPS, which then uses that information to show Dr. Daniels exactly where he needs to place any screws, much like GPS maps with satellite view can direct drivers where they are going more clearly than a paper map.

Previously, Dr. Daniels would do multiple CT scans and X-rays on a patient,



“There is less trauma to the patient and much less radiation exposure for (the medical staff). This is huge for our safety as well as our efficiency.”

A fully open surgery without the aid of ExcelsiusGPS can take about 3 hours, however Dr. Daniels expects with this new technology it might only take 1 ½ hours. Much of the time spent in a spinal fusion is making sure the doctor has the correct location for the screws that help bind the vertebrae together. This machine does not replace his expertise, however the technology is like another pair of eyes in the room.


“It is almost like having a second surgeon in the room,” he says. “It gives me more bandwidth to think about other elements of the surgery.”

By only making small incisions for the screws, instead of a large incision, it is also possible for the patient to recover from the surgery with less pain and faster mobility, Dr. Daniels says. This technology could make it possible to find the correct placement on older bones, which have more wear and tear, and can prove trickier for doctors to stabilize.

“The ExcelsiusGPS system helps us take better care of our patients,” says Kevin Bartel director of surgical service lines at Kaweah Health. “We want to use new technology to give the best care possible and help patients get well faster.”

The ExcelsiusGPS has been in use for several years, giving Dr. Daniels knowledge from colleagues that it is a vetted system.

“I don’t want to be first, but I also don’t want to be the last one to take advantage of something that will become the industry standard,” Dr. Daniels says.

Making spinal surgery more accurate and safer for both his patients and his team, Dr. Daniels is ultimately advancing Kaweah Health’s commitment to innovative, patient-centered orthopedic care. 

some during the surgery, ensuring he had the best view. The ExcelsiusGPS allows Dr. Daniels to use that one scan, using a touchscreen on the machine to position the robotic arm to the exact location he desires.

“Through the use of navigation and robotic assistance I am able to place all hardware with as few as two preliminary X-rays, all to within less than a millimeter of accuracy. This level of accuracy dramatically surpasses the finest X-ray machines by a long shot,” Dr. Daniels says.



ExcelsiusGPS®



**PIONEERING
ROBOTIC NAVIGATION**



Kaweah Health Medical Center has been named one of America’s 100 Best Spine Surgery™ hospitals by Healthgrades. With advances in technology and dedicated partners from Center Neurorestoration Associates and spinal surgeons, Dr. Mathias Daniels and Dr. Frank Feng, Kaweah Health makes it possible for patients to stay close to home and receive world-class spine care in Visalia.

The Right Care

Melodie Furtado was back at work just days after her spinal surgery



Melodie Furtado did everything she could to avoid having spinal surgery again. The pain and slow recovery time of her first surgery 10 years ago was something she didn't want to repeat, no matter how much she ached.

In her mind she had gone to the best at a hospital in southern California and she just didn't ever feel great. Melodie, of Tulare, suffers from arthritis, an inflammation and stiffness in her joints. She had a spinal fusion, a surgery that permanently joins together two or more bones in the spine, called vertebrae, so there is no movement between them. The goal is to stop painful motion and strengthen the spine.

After managing the return of aches and pains with cortisone injections and everything but surgery, her left leg just ached and ached. Not only were everyday things harder, she wasn't able to play with her 19 grandchildren and her quality of life wasn't where she wanted it.

"The only way I can describe (my leg) is it hurt all the way to the bone," Melodie says.

Instead of going back to Irvine, this time Melodie started seeing orthopedic surgeon Mathias Daniels, M.D. at Kaweah Health. He is board-certified and spine fellowship-trained, specializing in spine and orthopedic surgery.

"I liked that Dr. Daniels was proactive, but did not jump to having surgery," she says. "He is very well mannered and he cares about his patients."

Dr. Daniels did what he could until surgery was the only option to stop her pain.

"I was prepared to be in the hospital for days like last time," Melodie says. "I had the surgery and I was up and walking the same day."


Melodie had her surgery on a Tuesday, went home from Kaweah Health on Wednesday, and was back to working from home by Monday. Recovery from her first surgery required a lot of pain medication and a walker, but she didn't need either this time.

"That was huge," she says. "It makes you stop and think 'why do we think we have to go away to find the best care?'"

It isn't just Dr. Daniels and his work that has her grateful for Kaweah Health's world-class care. Two years ago her husband was saved here after suffering a major heart attack. She and her son performed CPR before the emergency medical personnel arrived and he was rushed to the hospital.

"Thank God for the nurses who were working that night," Melodie says. "The doctor saved his life and the nurses and staff gave him great care."

Now she and her husband are back to attending their grandchildren's baseball games and playing with them as much as possible. And in the near future, Melodie is on her way to doing something else she never thought she would do — having much needed neck surgery.

"I know I have arthritis everywhere, but I don't want to not be able to do anything," she says. "I'm very hopeful. I trust Dr. Daniels." 

For spine surgery patients Kaweah Health brings more to the table.

Kaweah Health Medical Center has been named one of America's 100 Best Spine Surgery™ hospitals by Healthgrades®.



Nationally-recognized spine care in Visalia

Talented: Because of dedicated spinal surgeons like Dr. Mathias Daniels, Dr. Frank Feng, and neurosurgeons from Center Neurorestoration Associates, patients in our area can receive world-class spinal care here, close to home.

Experienced: Each year, Kaweah Health performs more than 500 spinal surgeries and is honored to be recognized by Healthgrades as one of America's 100 Best Spine Surgery™ hospitals.

Advanced: Utilizing technology like the ExcelsiusGPS™ makes spinal surgery less invasive, leading to shorter hospital stays and patients returning sooner to the things they love.

World-class care

Talented, Experienced, Advanced — when it comes to spine surgery, Kaweah Health brings more to the table.



400 West Mineral King Avenue • Visalia, CA 93291



To learn more, visit
[KaweahHealth.org/Spine](https://www.KaweahHealth.org/Spine)



Every Second Counts

Kaweah Health's Rapid Response Team saves lives

In moments of life-threatening emergencies, a specialized team at Kaweah Health can be seen racing through the hospital to help. Kaweah Health's Rapid Response Team is trained to respond to code blue situations — medical crises where every second is critical for saving lives.

This team of specially trained nurses is ready to go anywhere in the hospital. In the last two years, they have responded to 268 code blue calls, most involving cardiac arrest. Cardiac arrest occurs when the heart suddenly stops beating which can be due to disease processes such as an electrical malfunction or a heart attack, which is caused by blocked blood flow to the heart.

Recently, the Rapid Response Team received the prestigious Gold Award

from the American Heart Association, a recognition given for meeting high standards in resuscitation care under the Get with the Guidelines program. To earn this award, a team must meet all benchmarks for resuscitation at or above 85 percent for at least two consecutive years.

This is the first time Kaweah Health's Rapid Response Team has received this award, showcasing their hard work and commitment to excellence in emergency care.

"When we respond to an emergency, we don't need to talk; we instinctively know what each of us will do," says Jennifer Islas, RN, a member of the Rapid Response Team.

This teamwork extends beyond the Rapid Response Team itself.

"Rapid response brings everyone together," says Allyson Onstott, RN, a Rapid Response Team



▲ Kaweah Health's Rapid Response Team delivers life-saving care in an instant. (L-R): Mayra Abundis Tejada, RN, Remington Pipkin, RN, Kayla Ourique, RN, Elizebeth Dutra, RN, and Leonel Donate Perez, RN


member. "All departments come together, creating a sense of camaraderie. Staff recognize us, trust us, and that trust is invaluable."

Kaweah Health is one of only nine hospitals in California to receive the American Heart Association's Get with The Guidelines Resuscitation Gold Award. There are 10 team members who serve on the Rapid Response Team: Mayra Abundis Tejada, RN, Elizebeth Dutra, RN, Danielle Essex-Torres, RN, Jennifer Islas, RN, Mayra Martinez, RN, Nancy Murphy, RN, Allyson Onstott, RN, Kayla Ourique, RN, Leonel Donate Perez, RN, and Remington Pipkin, RN.

A key to the team's success is the vigilance of nursing staff who recognize warning signs and call a code blue when necessary. Early recognition allows the Rapid Response Team to arrive even faster.

"We actively educate other nurses on how to recognize and respond to emergencies. It's rewarding to see all floors working together," says Danielle Essex-Torres, RN, another team member.

Shannon Cauthen, the Director of Cardiovascular and Critical Care Services, expressed pride in the team for achieving this national recognition.

"Their commitment to performing CPR correctly gives patients a better chance at survival and recovery," Cauthen says. "It's all about giving each person the best possible chance." 

There are four measures the team must meet:

- Making sure breathing tubes are correctly placed when patients can't breathe well.
- How quickly a defibrillator is used to restart a stopped heart.
- How quickly the heart medicine epinephrine is given during a heart emergency.
- Tracking how many cardiac events are detected by monitoring systems, helping the team react quickly.



A Heart Restored

Rehabilitation therapy has Dana Gomez moving again after a major heart attack

For Dana Gomez, a Visalia native and longtime baseball coach, June 7, 2024, started like any other day at work. As a night shift employee, he was used to long hours and fatigue, but that morning felt different.

“I felt unusually winded, but I brushed it off,” he recalls.

Later, without warning, Dana collapsed—his heart stopped for 10 minutes.

At home in Tulare, his wife Tammy received an urgent call about an accident

at his workplace. Unaware of the seriousness, she rushed to the local hospital. By the time she arrived, paramedics had successfully restarted Dana’s heart, but he was in critical condition. He was quickly transferred to Kaweah Health Medical Center, where a team of cardiac specialists worked to stabilize him, eventually implanting a defibrillator and pacemaker to regulate his heart.

Dana has little memory of those critical first days, but Tammy remembers every moment vividly.



▲ Kaweah Health Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation Manager Connie Chamberlain works with patient Dana Gomez after his heart attack.

up, hearing my wife call my name, and feeling grateful to be alive.”

He soon learned about the severity of his condition and the life-saving measures taken to keep him alive.

After being discharged from the hospital, Dana began his recovery with Kaweah Health’s in-home physical therapy. Twice a week, rehabilitation specialists guided him through exercises to help him regain strength and confidence.

“At first, it was just small stuff—walking, basic exercises—but it made a big difference,” Dana says.

This steady progress motivated him to keep pushing forward. Eventually, Dana transitioned to Kaweah Health’s Cardiac Rehabilitation Program three times a week at Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital for more-intensive therapy.

“I knew it was going to be challenging,” he admits. “It was tough, but I knew it was helping.”

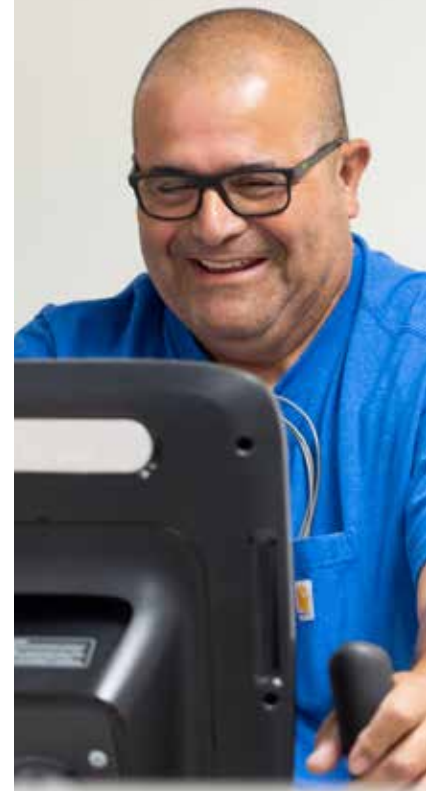
Each session brought him closer to regaining his physical strength.

A graduate of Redwood High School, Dana was a pitcher for College of the Sequoias before being drafted by the Boston Red Sox in 1986. Today, he continues to enjoy life—coaching baseball, spending time with loved ones, and appreciating the small moments.

“It makes you appreciate the little things,” he reflects. “Just being able to walk outside, feel the wind, and see the trees. I’m just thankful to be here.”

Dana’s journey serves as a reminder that cardiac events can happen unexpectedly, but with determination and the right care, recovery is possible. Surviving cardiac arrest taught him to embrace life with a renewed sense of gratitude. [KH](#)

Learn more about your heart health at [KawahHealth.org/Heart](https://www.kawahhealth.org/Heart).



— “
It makes you appreciate the little things — just being able to walk outside, feel the wind, and see the trees. I’m just thankful to be here.
” —

— Dana Gomez on his rehabilitation journey

“It was terrifying, but the care team was incredible. They walked us through everything,” she says.

Family gathered at the hospital, uncertain of the outcome. Dana, still unconscious, was receiving around-the-clock care as his medical team monitored him closely.

When Dana regained consciousness, he found himself surrounded by family.

“I didn’t remember collapsing or what had happened,” he says. “But I remember waking

Heartbeat of

Advanced heart care in the South Valley



▲ The cardiologists of Kaweah Health Cardiology Center: (L-R) Drs. Harleen Chahil, David Cislowski, Ankur V. Gupta, Dennis Johnson,

Hear disease remains one of the most critical health concerns in the South Valley, where heart-related conditions occur at more than twice the California average. After decades of steady decline in heart disease rates from 1960 to the early 2000s, recent years have revealed a troubling increase, especially among younger adults. This shift, coupled with advancements in cardiovascular medicine, amplifies the need for early detection and advanced treatments to ensure comprehensive heart care. Now more than ever, taking proactive steps to care for your heart at every stage of life is key to a long and healthy life.

The Kaweah Health Cardiology Centers in Visalia and Tulare are proud to offer comprehensive cardiology services and have become a leading provider for heart care in the South Valley. Patients have access to modern, high-quality cardiac

care without the need to travel out of the area. The center provides diagnostic and therapeutic cardiology services and offers a wide range of cardiology sub-specialists. To better serve patients across the county, some of our cardiologists have regular hours at our network of rural clinics in Tulare, Exeter, and Dinuba, bringing heart care across Tulare County and into smaller communities where the need is high.

Cutting-Edge Technology Meets Expert Care

At the core of Kaweah Health's cardiac services are five advanced cardiac catheterization labs at Kaweah Health Medical Center in downtown Visalia. These facilities, equipped with the latest in imaging and intervention technology, allow specialists to identify and treat a wide range of heart issues. The center's cath lab program, initiated in 1996, has grown significantly. In just the past three years, more than 15,000 procedures have been performed.

the Valley



Cardiovascular procedures and services

- Transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR)
- Watchman device implantation for atrial fibrillation
- Cardiothoracic surgery including cardiac bypass surgery and thoracic surgery
- Vascular and endovascular surgery
- Electrophysiology for heart rhythm disorders

Harry Lively, Sarmad Said, and Atul Singla

There is also a comprehensive suite of services available at the Kaweah Health Diagnostic Center in Visalia, including advanced echocardiography, stress testing, cardiac PET CT scans, and more.


Cleveland Clinic Affiliation: Elevating Care Standards

Kaweah Health's affiliation with the Cleveland Clinic Heart, Vascular and Thoracic Institute has brought the expertise of a world-leading cardiovascular care institution to the Central Valley, ensuring that patients receive treatment aligned with the latest advancements in cardiac medicine. For decades, Cleveland Clinic has been a nationally-recognized heart hospital by numerous organizations.

Patient-Centered Approach

The Cardiology and Diagnostic centers stand out through their commitment to patient-centered care, complementing their advanced technology and experienced team. By creating

a supportive environment and emphasizing clear communication, staff members ensure patients understand their conditions and treatment plans while feeling cared for throughout their medical journey.

At Kaweah Health Cardiology Centers, we are proud to provide cardiology services that combine advanced medical expertise with a strong emphasis on patient care and education. We are here not just to treat heart conditions — but to help patients lead healthier, fuller lives. 

Learn more about our heart and vascular care at KaweahHealth.org/Heart.

You can make an appointment to see a cardiologist by visiting KaweahHealth.org/HeartDoctor.

The Heart of Innovation



In affiliation with



Affiliation with renowned medical center brings significant advantages

Kaweah Health's commitment to exceptional cardiac care has led to innovative partnerships and improved patient outcomes over the years. Since 2019, Kaweah Health has been an affiliate of Cleveland Clinic Heart, Vascular and Thoracic Institute. This affiliation offers many benefits, including collaboration on patient care, outcomes, quality reporting, clinical research, and heart care advancements to elevate the level of care available in Tulare and Kings counties.

Access to World-Class Expertise

Through the affiliation, Kaweah Health gains access to cutting-edge knowledge and practices in cardiac medicine, ensuring patients in the Central Valley receive treatment aligned with the latest advancements in the rapidly progressing field of cardiology. The affiliation provides Kaweah Health's cardiologists with direct access to Cleveland Clinic's pioneering research and innovations, supporting their ongoing education and proficiency. The end result is high-quality cardiac care for the local community.

Kaweah Health's Chief Strategy Officer Marc Mertz knows firsthand the value of working with leaders in the field.

"Our affiliation with Cleveland Clinic Heart, Vascular and Thoracic Institute represents a significant step forward in cardiac care for the Central Valley. They are a world-renowned leader in cardiovascular medicine, and we're bringing the latest innovations and expertise directly to our community," he says.

Mertz points to the use of the WATCH-MAN device in patients with atrial fibrillation (AFib).

"Kaweah Health was the first hospital in the area to begin using this device as of 2023," says Mertz.

Cleveland Clinic has been significantly involved in the research, development, and clinical use of the WATCH-MAN device and other minimally invasive procedures.



What is Cleveland Clinic?

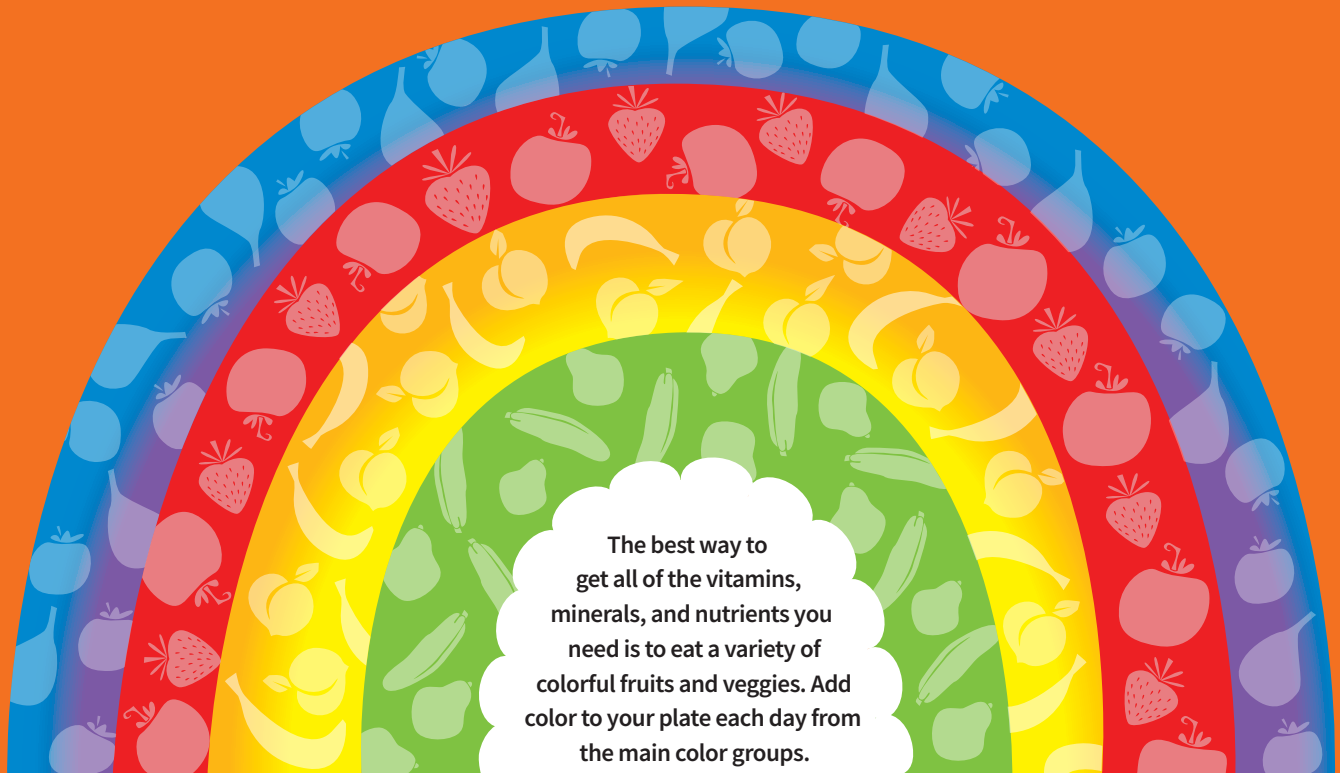
Cleveland Clinic was founded in 1921 by Drs. George Crile Sr., Frank Bunts, William Lower, and John Phillips, four WWI army surgeons who established a non-profit group practice integrating patient care, research, and education. Their patient-centered approach transformed the local hospital into a global medical leader. Since its founding, Cleveland Clinic has made significant contributions to cardiovascular care. These contributions have advanced both techniques and technologies that have improved patient care worldwide. Here are just a few examples of how they have contributed to the field of interventional cardiology:

- Developed and refined multiple interventional cardiology procedures
- Played a crucial role in the early development and refinement of coronary angioplasty techniques
- Contributed to improving balloon angioplasty procedures, making them safer and more effective.
- Pioneered the evolution of coronary stents, including the development and testing of drug-eluting stents
- Improved cardiac imaging and diagnostic tools such as intravascular ultrasound (IVUS) and optical coherence tomography (OCT).
- Led the development of transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR) techniques

"Hospitals affiliated with Cleveland Clinic's Heart, Vascular and Thoracic Institute share an unwavering commitment to continuous improvement across all aspects of cardiovascular care delivery," says Suma Thomas, MD, Vice Chairman, Strategic Operations, Cleveland Clinic Heart, Vascular and Thoracic Institute. "Kaweah Health exhibits this commitment in its clinical, operational, and quality activities. As the only Cleveland Clinic affiliate in California, Kaweah's physicians and caregivers have access to nationally recognized Cleveland Clinic heart experts, resulting in optimized outcomes for Kaweah's patients and continuing high-quality cardiovascular care." 

FOR A HEALTHY HEART

Eat a Rainbow!



The best way to get all of the vitamins, minerals, and nutrients you need is to eat a variety of colorful fruits and veggies. Add color to your plate each day from the main color groups.

BLUE AND PURPLE

blackberries
blueberries
black currants
dates
eggplants
grapes
plums
prunes
purple figs
raisins

ORANGE AND YELLOW

acorn squash
butternut squash
apricots
cantaloupes
carrots
corn
grapefruit
lemons
mangoes
nectarines
oranges
orange peppers
papayas
peaches
pineapples
pumpkins
summer squash
sweet potatoes
tangerines
yams
yellow apples
yellow peppers
yellow squash

GREEN

artichokes
asparagus
avocados
bok choy
broccoli
Brussels sprouts
celery
collard greens
cucumbers
green beans
green cabbage
green grapes
green onions
green peppers

WHITE

bananas
cauliflower
garlic
Jerusalem artichokes
mushrooms
onions
potatoes
parsnips
shallots

MORE GREEN

kale
kiwis
leeks
limes
mustard greens
okra
pears
peas
romaine lettuce
snow peas
spinach
sugar snap peas
watercress
zucchini

RED AND PINK

beets
cherries
cranberries
pink grapefruit
pomegranates
radicchio
red radishes
red apples
red grapes
red peppers
red potatoes
rhubarb
strawberries
tomatoes
watermelons



f | y | x | i VISIT: KaweahHealth.org

CREDIT: based on information from heart.org/HealthyForGood

Introducing...

Kaweah Health brings new specialists across many disciplines



Dr. Harleen Chahil
Interventional Cardiologist

Dr. Chahil emphasizes patient empowerment through education and personalized heart health strategies. She is board certified in internal medicine, cardiovascular disease, interventional cardiology, and echocardiography.



Dr. Ryan Dean
Orthopedic Trauma Surgeon

Dr. Dean treats trauma patients locally, reducing the need for transfers. He is part of a team providing 24/7 care at Tulare County's only level III trauma center.



Dr. Amitoj Gill
Medical Oncologist
and Hematologist

Dr. Gill delivers compassionate, personalized cancer care informed by cutting-edge research. He is board certified in internal medicine, hematology, and oncology.



Dr. Holly Quinn
OB-GYN

Dr. Quinn, a Visalia native, provides obstetric and gynecological care to meet the growing needs of the community. She has a strong commitment to empowering women through preventative care.



Dr. Roxanne Talamayan-Pascua
Hospice and Palliative Medicine

Dr. Talamayan provides holistic, compassionate care focused on enhancing quality of life for patients and families. She is board certified in Family Medicine and Hospice and Palliative Medicine.



Dr. Danny Vazquez
Radiation Oncologist

Dr. Vazquez coordinates multidisciplinary cancer care, working closely with specialists to deliver comprehensive treatment plans tailored to each patient.



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

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



Still in the Game

Gene Smith's
commitment
to fitness at 95



After playing professional basketball, coaching, and making it into five hall of fames, going to the gym is more than a habit. At 95, Gene Smith is a testament to the power of staying active, engaged, and connected. A member of Kaweah Health Lifestyle Fitness Center for 27 years, Gene is a well-known figure at the gym, where he and his wife, Bess, work out five times a week.

“Lifestyle has been our home away from home,” Gene says. “Our daughter Paula and her husband, Chris, are also members, so we enjoy having a daily, mini family reunion here.”

Gene’s love for sports has shaped his life, both on and off the court. A former professional basketball player with the Los Angeles Lakers, formerly the Minneapolis Lakers, Gene’s journey has taken him from the National Basketball Association to Visalia, where he is a local legend. He became a varsity basketball coach at Redwood High School and served as a sports official in the Kings-Tulare area for 35 years. His dedication earned him five hall of fame inductions, including the Kings-Tulare Counties Sports Officials Association Hall of Fame (1994) and the South Dakota Sports Hall of Fame (2003).

Despite his accolades, Smith remains humble. His workouts at Lifestyle Fitness Center aren’t just about fitness—they’re about community.

“I’ve gotten to know most of the members over the years. We may not know each other’s names, but we greet each other with a smile or a chat. It’s like a family,” he says.

Gene and Bess stick to their daily fitness routine, going to the gym from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. every day. He also regularly takes the body assessment test at the gym, helping him track his abilities and identify areas for improvement.

“I encourage everyone to take it because not many people know what areas need improvement. It’s been a great way to keep myself in check and see how I’m doing,” Gene says.

For Gene, staying active is a lifelong commitment. He credits his dedication to fitness for keeping him strong and healthy well into his senior years. But the social aspect of his routine is just as important.

“Every day, I meet someone new or learn something about someone I didn’t know before. It’s inspiring to see young people working out, and I hope they stay with it into their senior years, as I have,” he reflects.

As Gene looks back on his life, he’s filled with gratitude for the experiences and friendships that have shaped him. His advice? “Age only defines you if you let it. Every day is a new opportunity to get better.”

At 95, Gene is still in the game, showing what it means to live a life well-played.

KH

Learn more about how Lifestyle Fitness Center can help you stay healthy at [TheLifestyleCenter.org](https://www.thelifestylecenter.org).



Wishing Well Gift Shop Opens

Wishing Well Gift Shop is open daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Kaweah Health Hospital's gift shop has reopened with a new name and a new look. The Wishing Well Gift Shop located next to Ambrosia Café in the Mineral King lobby features gifts, essentials, and fresh-cut flowers.

After being shuttered during the Covid 19 pandemic to make room for an extended emergency department waiting room, the reopening of the gift

shop is another sign of returning to normal operations.

"I'm excited to have this available for our patients, their families, and our employees," says Sonia Sanchez, retail food services manager.

The gift shop is also partnering with El Diamonte High School's ornamental horticultural department to offer

fresh-cut flower arrangements. The students will be making the arrangements that are sold in the gift shop.

"We are grateful for this community partnership opportunity," Sanchez says. **KH**



Tiny Feet, Big Steps

New Foundation campaign aims to improve pediatric and surgical care

This fall, the Kaweah Health Foundation kicked off its latest capital campaign, Tiny Feet, Big Steps, with the goal of helping both our youngest patients and older patients having short-stay surgeries.

The campaign will raise funds for renovating the Pediatric Unit and expanding the 3E Surgical Recovery Unit for short-term stays within the medical center. Both areas have seen significant advancement in care in the last 20 years and the rooms need a refresh.

“With this campaign, we will remodel each unit, creating more comfortable surroundings for patients,” says Foundation Director Liz Wynn. “The pediatric area remodel will allow the children and their families to be more comfortable. Staying close to home is easier for families, and our youngest patients always feel better and more secure when family is nearby.”

The campaign will also cover a remodel of the pediatric play area, which gives almost-recovered children a place to burn off excess energy while enticing older kids to leave their rooms and move around more, which is important to their recovery. The project will also include updated nurses’ stations, an exam room, and a nutrition room.

Surgical recovery is an area that has seen large growth in patient volumes, thanks to an aging population that desires better mobility. The plan is to expand the area so patients with less-complex surgeries can be treated more efficiently.

“When you’re in pain, you want treatment fast,” Wynn says, noting that this addition will also mean more patients can get care.

The campaign aims to raise \$3 million over a three-year period. Our own Kaweah Health employees are expected to donate about half of the money during the campaign. Nearly half of all Kaweah Health employees participate in the Employee Giving program, which sees employees donate a portion of each paycheck to the Foundation. The Foundation is offering community members or organizations room and unit naming opportunities in both units for larger donations. Call the Foundation office at (559) 624-2359 for more information. **KH**

To make a donation of any size or set up recurring donations, visit **KaweahHealth.org/BigSteps** or scan the code below.





Thank You!

The Kaweah Health Foundation's Annual Golf Classic on August 2, 2024 was a tremendous success, and we want to acknowledge the support from so many community friends and the Kaweah Health family.

The tournament netted more than \$144,000 to benefit the Foundation's Guardian Angel Fund, which provides life-saving technology and equipment.

Just recently, event funds contributed to the purchase of five Vein Viewer Imaging Systems for Kaweah Health. These devices help phlebotomists obtain blood samples from patients by showing the exact location of veins, reducing incidences of painful, repeated draws.

Also purchased was a Sonosite PX Ultrasound for the Kaweah Health Emergency Department. This device makes possible a more rapid and accurate diagnosis and treatment for patients with chest pains or other complications.

The next Annual Golf Classic will be held August 1, 2025.

Early 2025 tournament funds will go toward the purchase of new state-of-the-art surgical lights for our Cardiac Intensive Care Unit. Learn more at KaweahHealth.org/Foundation.



THANK YOU

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



ALSO, to our GOLD and SILVER, CONTEST, TEE & GREEN, REFRESHMENT, CART, PRIME LOCATION, AND PRIZE SPONSORS!

And to the PARTICIPANTS and VOLUNTEERS!



THANK YOU 2024 GOLF CLASSIC COMMITTEE MEMBERS!



Stepping Out

Innovative mobility training course helps rehabilitation patients

▲ Araceli Cabrera, rehab aide, and Nadia Fahoum, physical therapist, assist Antonio Cardenas across loose gravel in the new mobility course.

When you are relearning how to walk sometimes it's the grass that trips you up and sometimes it's the rocks. Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital's new mobility course helps patients who have had life-altering injuries relearn how to maneuver through various types of terrain.

The mobility training course features river rock, gravel, brick walkways, flagstone, pebbles, crushed rock, turf, curbs, and various ramps. This practice area will allow patients to safely develop the skills needed to navigate hazardous terrains while walking or using a wheelchair, all under the expert guidance of Kaweah Health's skilled medical professionals. A ribbon cutting was held for the space, funded by Maison Law Accident & Injury Lawyers, in September.

After 30 years of serving the community, Kaweah Health is an expert in the field of acute rehabilitation, said Molly Niederreiter, director of rehabilitation and skilled services.

CELEBRATING
30 Years.
Countless lives.

Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital is celebrating 30 years of helping patients get back on their feet. Since opening in 1994, many dedicated physical, occupational, and speech therapists, nurses, doctors, and support staff have helped thousands of patients do everything from relearning how to walk, get dressed, or get in and out of a car.

For more information on the Rehabilitation Hospital visit [KawahHealth.org/Rehab](https://www.kawahhealth.org/Rehab).

"This is another tool in our toolbox to help us provide evidenced based interventions tailored to meet the needs of each individual," Niederreiter said. "We thank Maison Law for helping make this happen."

By building confidence and practical experience, the Maison Law Mobility Training Course at Kaweah Health empowers patients to regain their independence and resume their normal lives beyond the hospital's walls.

Kaweah Health CEO Gary Herbst pointed out how special the Rehabilitation Hospital is with all the different care offered inside, including physical, occupational, and speech therapies.

"If you don't believe in miracles, just come here," Herbst said. "What our rehabilitation therapists are able to achieve is miraculous."

Martin Gasparian, Esq with Maison Law said his firm likes to focus on prevention with its community donations, but that isn't always possible.

"If we can't prevent accidents, we thought helping people recover would be the next best thing," Gasparian said.

KH

Out and About



National Alliance on Mental Illness Walk

The Kaweah Health Mental Health Hospital team participated in the annual National Alliance on Mental Illness Walk (NAMIWalks). NAMIWalks is dedicated to promoting mental health awareness and providing vital information to families and individuals facing mental health challenges.

Together, our team walked to support this important cause, spreading hope and understanding in our community. They also shared information about our mental health hospital services, Kaweah Health's outpatient services, and local resources for accessing outpatient mental health support.



Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Chili Verde Golf Tournament

Kaweah Health is a proud sponsor of the Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Chili Verde Golf Tournament. Our team had a fantastic time on the course and finished strong at 7 under par.

It was a great day of networking, camaraderie, and some friendly competition. We look forward to future collaborations.



Tulare County Fair booth

Our employees had a great time at our Kaweah Health booth at the Tulare County Fair. Our Kaweah Health Tulare Clinic, Willow Clinic, Kaweah Helps, Rehabilitation, and Community Outreach teams loved connecting with you and sharing all the amazing services we offer.



Good Grief Camp

Very few people, especially children, know how to process deep sadness. Our Good Grief Camp, put on by the Kaweah Health Grief Support Services, provided a safe and enjoyable space for participants to experience joy and peace amid their sadness.



Día de los Muertos

Kaweah Health celebrated Día de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead), a time to honor the lives and memories of our departed loved ones. Our Hospice and Palliative Care teams created a beautiful traditional offrenda adorned with photos and décor, that allowed staff to pay tribute to those they cherish.



Girls and Guitars

The 9th Annual Girls and Guitars event, brought to you by 106.7 KJUG Country and Kaweah Health was an incredible night filled with music, laughter, and generosity, all benefiting the Kaweah Health Breast Center.

We're thrilled to share that we raised about 50% more than last year. Thank you to 106.7 KJUG Country, the Visalia Fox Theatre, Vanessa Rae, Meg Patrick, the Josh Day Band, and the Visalia police and fire departments for their contributions. And of course, thank you to everyone who attended and bid on our live and silent auction items. Your support truly makes a difference.



Lions and Turkeys Oh My

Kaweah Health Hospice partnered with the Visalia Breakfast Lions Club to provide Thanksgiving meals to 104 families through our annual Turkey Drive. This incredible effort was made possible by the Visalia Breakfast Lions, who generously donated 110 turkeys, and the compassion of our amazing Kaweah Health departments, who contributed all the fixings for a perfect Thanksgiving dinner. From canned corn to pumpkin pies, every single contribution made a difference.

For diagnosing
and treating
heart problems,
**Kaweah
Health brings
more to
the table.**

KAWEAH HEALTH CARDIAC CATH LABS

Since 2019, Kaweah Health has been affiliated with **Cleveland Clinic Heart, Vascular & Thoracic Institute**, a nationally ranked, world leader in cardiovascular care. Our wide range of specialized care includes heart catheterization, stent placements, and Watchman™ devices.



In affiliation with

