

Fall 2023

visions

NCAL NURSING NEWSLETTER

A place for news, insight, and connection into the heart of the Kaiser Permanente Northern California nursing community



Florinda Nicolas, BSN, RNFA, Lacy Bocangel, Surgical Tech and Rosio Bernal, RNFA at an Operation Access event in Walnut Creek.

Caring for our communities

Growing up, the parents of **Nichole Silveira, BSN, RN**, instilled in her the importance of giving back to their local community through volunteerism. This included volunteer work at a local hospital, so it's no surprise she chose nursing as her career path and has been dedicated to caring for others for 11 years.

When she joined Kaiser Permanente as the Perioperative Nurse Manager at the Walnut Creek Medical Center, she was excited to learn about the organization's 30-year partnership with Operation Access, which provides surgical and other specialty care to low-income and uninsured adults on Super Saturday Surgery Days, "I was thrilled to have the opportunity to apply my childhood lessons in giving back as a nurse."

"I had heard about Operation Access happening in Walnut Creek in years prior, so I was eager to work with the team to

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bring it back in 2023," said **Silveira**. "Partnering with **Florinda Nicolas, BSN, RN First Assistant**, we recruited medical center volunteers to pull-off two Super Saturday Surgery Days in Walnut Creek this year."

Their efforts benefited **Yolanda Trujillo**, who had trouble lifting her 3-year-old daughter because of a painful hernia. It was repaired with a free surgery, and she said of the experience, "I've had great service, and I've been treated well by very good people."

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Leader Message from Toby Marsh, Regional CNE and VP, Clinical Integration

It's incredible to see how the care our NCAL nurses provide is positively impacting the health and well-being of our patients, members, and the communities we serve.

Here are a few examples of how your dedication and commitment shine brightly in this issue of Visions:

- Bay Area nurses volunteer to perform nearly 800 procedures and surgeries through a partnership with Operation Access.
- San Francisco nurse exemplifies our culture of nursing excellence.
- Expert nursing care supports one-of-a-kind Medical Psychiatric Unit in Fremont.
- San Jose nurse advocates to improve air quality and safety for patients and colleagues in the operating room.

Thank you for continuing to advance the extraordinary nursing you do every day to make Kaiser Permanente the best place to give and receive care.

With gratitude,

From front page Caring for our communities

Walnut Creek was among 17 medical centers and ambulatory surgery units around the Bay Area to hold the surgery day events this year, including Antioch, Dublin, Fremont, Martinez, Oakland, Petaluma, Redwood City, Richmond, San Francisco, San Leandro, San Rafael, Santa Rosa, South San Francisco, Union City, Vallejo, and Vacaville.

"I love being able to help my community and share my knowledge," said **Nicolas**, who first volunteered with Operation Access in 2014, and has since participated at various medical centers. "I find joy knowing I'm making an impact on the patients I've helped over the years, and seeing how they've recovered from medical issues that made their lives difficult."

With hundreds of nurses and interdisciplinary team members volunteering their time this year, nearly 800 surgical and specialty care procedures

were provided such as hernia repairs, gallbladder removal, eye surgery, head and neck surgery, and colonoscopies.

"I am so proud of our organization for continuing with this program for those in our communities that normally would not have access to health care and are in need of life-saving surgeries," said **Pavna C. Sloan, DNP, RN, RNC-OB, NEA-BC**, East Bay Chief Nurse Executive. "The patients are eternally grateful, and the volunteers are surrounded by others who also enjoy giving back."

Volunteering with Operation Access is so rewarding shares **Regina Obiajulu, MSN, RN, PHN**, Assistant Nurse Manager in Perioperative Services at the Oakland Medical Center. "It makes us feel good that we are doing our duty to humanity, but what's even better is knowing that we are able to improve the quality of life for the patient so that they can get back to work, and be able to provide for their family."

"The people of Kaiser Permanente have an amazing heart to do this work," **Obiajulu** added.



Fremont MPU team members **Rajwinder Dhillon, MSN, RN**, Nurse Manager; **Brandon Holt, BSN, RN**, Assistant Nurse Manager; **Amanda Giang, BSN, RN**; **Stanley Lal, BSN, RN**; **Trista Smooth, BSN, RN**; and **Harpreet Kaur, BSN, RN**.

One-of-a-kind unit excels at treating psych patients

When a Kaiser Permanente patient was recently admitted to the Medical Psychiatric Unit (MPU) at the Fremont Medical Center she was unable to care for herself or her family due to severe anxiety, and unproductive thoughts, and was physically declining because she wasn't eating or drinking. This patient is just one example of the unique needs being met at the Fremont MPU.

The one-of-a-kind, 18 bed unit, which opened in 2019, provides treatment for patients who have an underlying medical condition along with an acute psychological disorder, eating disorder, substance abuse challenge or other mental health diagnosis.

"That's what makes our team unique – we have the skills and ability to provide care for both our patients' medical and psychological needs," said **Brandon Holt, BSN, RN**, Assistant Nurse Manager.

Nurses in this unit are required to have at least six months experience in medical-surgical-telemetry and two years inpatient acute psychiatric care. Finding nurses with this specific training can be difficult according to **Rajwinder Dhillon, MSN, RN**, Nurse Manager. Nurses with either experience can

be hired to training positions and then go through a specialized program with Kaiser Permanente to gain the required experience to join the unit. Additionally, all nurses on the unit go through conflict management and non-escalation training.

Staff nurse II **Stanley Lal, BSN, RN**, shared that working here isn't something everyone can do, but it's important, rewarding work. "Our patients are unable to care for themselves due to their unique combination of physical and mental conditions. We become a familiar face and can guide them back to health and self-sufficiency."

The team of nurses spend a lot of one-on-one time during supervised meal and snack times, while passing medication, or when a patient requires more attention, and they work hard to build a rapport and trust with the patients in their care.

"The positive care experience scores for our unit speaks volumes about the care our nurses and our interdisciplinary teams provide," added **Holt**.

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Reading to our tiniest members

Santa Clara neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) nurses have taken their extraordinary nursing care above and beyond by reading to babies under their care to help benefit brain growth and development.

Santa Clara Chief Nurse Executive **Stacy Alves, DNP, RN, NEA-BC**, describes the NICU team as a shining example of what makes Kaiser Permanente so great. "They have taken the empirical evidence around developmental needs of pre-term babies in the intensive care setting, and integrated that with our nursing theory of Caring Science to create a reading program that meets the holistic needs of our babies and their families."

Reading to the babies has received praise from parents with one of a baby born at 23-weeks sharing, "I loved the reading program. It was great for bonding, and it was a great tool to build familiarity of my voice for my daughter. We continue to read to her."

The year-round reading initiative also inspired the Santa Clara NICU team to participate in, and win, the annual Babies with Books read-a-thon, a friendly competition among 190 NICUs from around the world. During the seven days of competition, Santa Clara NICU nurses, leaders, and parents recorded 1,151 reading sessions which was the equivalent of each baby in the NICU being read to 12 to 13 times per day.

"Reading promotes wellness for the neonates, the parents, and the nurses themselves," added **Alves**. "Our professional registered nurses provide the extraordinary care on a daily

basis, and the read-a-thon helps bring awareness to the highly specialized needs of this patient population and a celebration of the harrowing journeys of these babies and families."



Santa Clara team members read to a baby in their care

The Santa Clara team presented their reading program at the National Association of Neonatal Nurse conference to spread this best practice beyond the walls of our organization, and their participation in the read-a-thon has been featured on the local news.

"I could not be prouder of this team, and how they are advancing the care delivery for this vulnerable and precious patient population," added **Alves**.

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One-of-a-kind unit excels at treating psych patients

And it's not just the care scores that stand out for this team. The unit, which faces patient safety challenges and risks associated with no call light system and the effects of anti-psychotic medication, performs well above average on patient safety benchmarks.

"Our excellent patient safety scores further demonstrate how strong the entire MPU team is and how hard we work to provide safe, extraordinary care to our patients," said **Dhillon**.

"This is a tough population to care for, but we can look back on cases like this one fondly, knowing we have provided the best care to get our patient back to baseline and safely discharged home," added **Dhillon**.

"As one of the very few inpatient Medical Psychiatric Units in our Northern California communities, the nurses and staff in the MPU truly live out Kaiser Permanente's mission to improve the health of our members and the communities we serve," said Fremont's Chief Nurse Executive/Chief Operating Officer, **Christopher Neilson, MHA, BSN, RN, NE-BC**. "They treat their patients with great skill, expertise and, importantly, compassion and grace."

Profile in Care: Janelle Casanave, RN

San Jose Medical Center, Ambulatory Surgery Unit

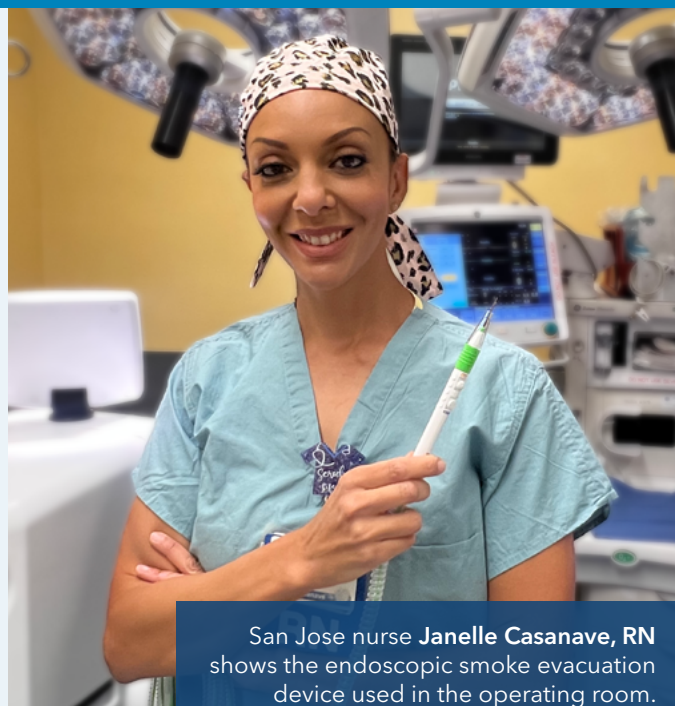
When **Janelle Casanave, RN**, began her career as an operating room nurse in 2012, she learned of the hazards of surgical smoke – which is generated by the cauterization of patient tissue during surgery.

“It was like being in a room with a group of people smoking cigarettes,” she explained. Like cigarettes, inhaling surgical smoke can be hazardous. According to the Association for Operating Room Nurses (AORN), surgical smoke not only contains harmful chemicals and lung-damaging particulate matter, but it may also contain biohazardous materials such as viruses, bacteria, blood, and potentially viable cancer cells.

Staff all wore the required personal protective equipment, and according to **Casanave**, everyone just tolerated the surgical smoke, and no one spoke up about it, so she didn’t either. That was until 2017, when she became pregnant with her first child.

“I didn’t want to expose my unborn child to the hazards of surgical smoke, so it was time to speak up,” **Casanave** said. A year into her employment at Kaiser Permanente, she also felt comfortable enough to speak up. With the support of her manager, surgeons, and colleagues, she started a Smoke-Free Initiative at the San Jose Medical Center.

She researched smoke evacuation equipment, and realized KP had the equipment needed available, but it wasn’t being used. She sprang into action, connecting with the local medical device rep to plan staff in-service on the endoscopic equipment. Within four months, all 12 operating rooms at the medical center were smoke-free.



San Jose nurse **Janelle Casanave, RN** shows the endoscopic smoke evacuation device used in the operating room.

In 2019, the San Jose Medical Center earned the Gold Status award from the AORN’s Go Clear Program, and recently was awarded the OR Excellence Award for Employee Safety.

Casanave’s efforts have reached beyond the San Jose Medical Center as she advocates for smoke-free operating rooms – even testifying before the state senate in favor of legislation that Gov. Gavin Newsom signed into law on Oct. 7 that will require all operating rooms in California be smoke-free by 2026.

“Janelle is an outstanding example of nursing excellence,” said **Elaine Ware, DNP, RN, CENP, CPHQ**, San Jose Chief Nurse Executive.

“I am so proud to have her on our team and grateful she had the courage to speak up for herself, her child, and all of her OR colleagues to impact their health for the better.”

If you are interested in joining the smoke-free movement, email Janelle.M.Casanave@kp.org to learn more.

Speaking up can save lives

Some may call it a superpower, but intuition is something we all have, and in September 2023, the intuition of assistant nurse manager **Samantha Russell, MSN, RNC-OB, C-EFM**, helped save the life of a patient at the SF medical center. It was around 3:30 a.m. when a pregnant patient who was admitted to the hospital for hypertension left her room to roam the hospital floor.

A security officer noticed the patient and quickly notified the RN team. With no shoes on and a blank stare on the pregnant mom's face, Russell knew something was amiss. With the help of her fellow nurses, Russell brought the patient back to her room and quickly called a rapid response stroke alert because she believed the patient's behavior demonstrated a potential neurological event.

"I noticed the condition for which she was being treated was refractory to the medication. While there were no overt signs of a stroke, I wondered if, considering her medical history, she could, in fact, be having a stroke," explained **Russell**.

Further testing confirmed the patient had experienced a neurological event, so she was transferred to the Redwood City Medical Center, where she received specialized care.

"It's the speak up culture that **Brenda Jones, DNP, RN**, clinical nursing director at the San Francisco Medical Center, has been building which made me feel comfortable acknowledging my intuition and voicing my opinion," said **Russell**. Through daily and quarterly rounding with our nursing staff, plus quarterly



San Francisco Medical Center MCH assistant nurse manager **Samantha Russell, RN, (L)** with Clinical Nursing Director **Brenda Jones, DNP, RN**.

rounding with security and housekeeping staff, Dr. Jones stresses the importance of speaking up.

"As a leader, I'm creating an environment where my staff can speak up without the fear of retribution," said **Jones**.

"I feel empowered. Speaking up and having my input not only welcomed but also considered, makes it more likely that I will do the same in the future," said **Russell**.

"It is important all KP employees speak up. Speaking up keeps members safe and fosters a positive work environment," stresses **Russell**.

LIFELONG LEARNING

KP Scholars Academy makes professional growth possible for nurses

Our nurses have been part of the second year of the Kaiser Permanente - University of California San Francisco (UCSF) leadership development programs and workshops. They were developed in partnership and are offered as part of UCSF's School of Nursing to provide our nurses growth opportunities.

"It's been so inspirational to experience the engagement and professional growth of our friends and colleagues," said **Jim D'Alfonso, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN**, Executive Director, Professional Excellence & The KP Scholars Academy.



Carrie Robertshaw, DNP, RN, NEA-BC and **Rosed Ignacia Libunao, RN** enjoy Graduation Day at the UCSF's school near Pier 39 in San Francisco.

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Virtual Reality enhances Periop 101 Training Program

Twelve registered nurse perioperative trainees, representing Oakland, Redwood City, San Rafael, and San Jose, gathered on October 9 to celebrate the completion of their intense six-month Northern California Periop 101 training program, and receive certificates from their nursing professional development educators and regional clinical practice consultants.

The program provides six regional classes to each cohort of learners who also receive precepted unit training. The classes combine lectures, hands-on skills, simulation, Caritas, and shared reflections to promote shared knowledge between learners. Once the training has been successfully completed, nurses are hired into staff nurse II positions.

New for 2023 is a pilot program integrating Virtual Reality (VR) and gamification to the training at Oakland, Redwood City, and San Rafael and for one surgical technology partner and program in the community.

Twenty VR program seats were purchased through combined funding from patient care services and



Latresa Stewart, MSN, RN, Interim Educator;
Michael Tam, RN, Staff Nurse II;
and **Jenny Mendenhall, MSN, RN, CHSE, CNOR**,
Regional Clinical Practice Consultant

community benefit to help operating room RNs and surgical technologists learn the names and functions of hundreds of surgical instruments for hundreds of surgical procedures ranging from eye surgery to orthopedic cases.

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KP Scholars Academy...

UCSF's Leadership Institute and Middle Management Institute provide seven months of training for their certificate programs. Two classes take place in person, while two hours per month are online. Evidence-Based Practice Workshops are offered as well.

The Middle Management Institute provides knowledge for assistant nurse managers and nurse managers and had participants from all 21 Northern California medical centers. Graduation Day was October 18.

Frances Harville, MSL, BSN, RN, Nurse Manager, KP Sacramento said, "It gives you a flavor of all that's

involved with being in leadership. It's great for ANMs who want to become directors and gives them a good idea of what the role entails."

"I feel blessed to be invested in," said **Rosed Ignacio Libunao, RN**. The program was excellent and really provided knowledge that I can put into practice." She attended the graduation with her mentor, **Carrie Robertshaw, DNP, RN, NEA-BC**, interim Chief Nurse Executive the Vallejo Medical Center, and received her certificate of completion from the Academy for the Interdisciplinary Leadership Program. She felt grateful that the Chief Nurse Executive of her medical center chose her to attend the program.

PROOF POINTS



Members of the Santa Rosa MCH team participate in a Team STEPPS workshop.

Santa Rosa team utilizes TeamSTEPPS to improve patient safety

Members of the Santa Rosa Maternal Child Health (MCH) Perinatal Patient Safety Program (PPSP) committee developed a comprehensive educational program aimed at improving patient safety in their department.

“With the addition of many new employees over the last few years, the committee felt it was important to reintroduce the skills of TeamSTEPPS® to improve teamwork and communication skills,” said **Rebecca Taylor-Ford, DNP, RN, NE-BC**, Associate Chief Nurse Executive at Kaiser Permanente Santa Rosa.

TeamSTEPPS, which stands for Strategies & Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety, is an evidence-based program that was developed by the Department of Defense’s Patient Safety Program in collaboration with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality as a strategy to improve safety in high-risk health care environments.

For months, the committee planned didactic training and interactive activities for an off-site meeting held on Oct. 19. The event provided nurses a chance to engage with their peers in a collaborative setting, with 160 colleagues in attendance including nursing, midwifery, anesthesia, OB technicians, unit assistants, and leadership.

“I loved getting together with my fellow MCH team members offsite. We were able to sit with people that we recognized but maybe didn’t know well or work with often,” said **Lynette Garza, RN**, Staff Nurse II. “By sitting with a multidisciplinary group of staff and providers, we heard different perspectives about care that we provide routinely during emergencies. The activities emphasized how everyone’s perspective is different, and without communication from all participants, it’s impossible to achieve our goals.”

TeamSTEPPS has been a successful tool for Santa Rosa, and when previously implemented they saw marked improvement in quality metrics such as C-Section Surgical Site Infections (SSIs) and sentinel events.

Building on positive feedback about the event from the team, **Taylor-Ford** shared the PPSP committee plans to hold a second session in the spring of 2024 and is also planning multidisciplinary clinical simulations, such as postpartum hemorrhage drills, “that put TeamSTEPPS skills into action to reinforce learnings.”

Urine samples “zoom” from Fresno ED to lab

During peak times in the Fresno Emergency Department (ED), patient urine samples had the potential to sit in their designated place for 45 minutes to an hour before staff walked it to the lab.

“When samples sit for longer duration at room temperature, exponential growth of normal flora is highly likely, and it can be one of the triggers to perform culture along with other established criteria,” said Nurse Manager **Reza Beheshti, DNP, RN, CCRN**. “Urine culture contamination was higher in the ED than in any other department.”

By using a pneumatic tube system that was already in place, the team significantly reduced the amount of time it takes for urine samples to travel to the lab for analysis, resulting in a 30-40-minute reduction in turnaround time.

“We wanted to expedite the process of getting samples to the lab to reduce the risk of contamination,” said Lab Director **Jatinder Kataria, PhD, CLS**. “This allows nurses and other colleagues more time with our patients, and reduced turnaround time for laboratory results. Both of these things improve the patient care experience.”

The team was already using the Pneumatic tube system to transport blood samples. “Those are 8 to 10 ml,” said **Kataria**, while urine samples can be 100 to 120 ml. “There was concern about the potential for a spill in the tube system due to greater volume, therefore, a risk assessment was performed, and a process was developed to mitigate those risks.

The team created tests using water in the containers and used double bags to put them in. “During the process, we also found the collection containers did not have the best seal and switched to a container with a better, tighter seal,” said **Beheshti**.

The team also switched collection cups and increased education for both staff and patients about how to properly collect the samples.



Nurse Educator **Christopher Davis, BSN, RN, CEN**, and Assistant Nurse Manager **Ramon Flores, BSN, RN, CCRN, CEN, CFRN, CPEN, CTRN, TRCN**, stand near the Pneumatic tube area in KP Fresno's Emergency Department.

Process improvement team members not shown include: Lab Director **Jatinder Kataria**; Nurse Manager **Reza Beheshti, DNP, RN, CCRN**; **Jabeen Mehar**, Assistant Laboratory Director; Nurse Manager **Dayna Worthan, MSN, MHA, RN, CEN**; and **Mark Lindon**, Service Unit Non-RN Manager II.

Beheshti and **Kataria** partnered with several other project managers on the process improvement project. The team is pleased with the new process and anticipate a decrease in contamination levels.

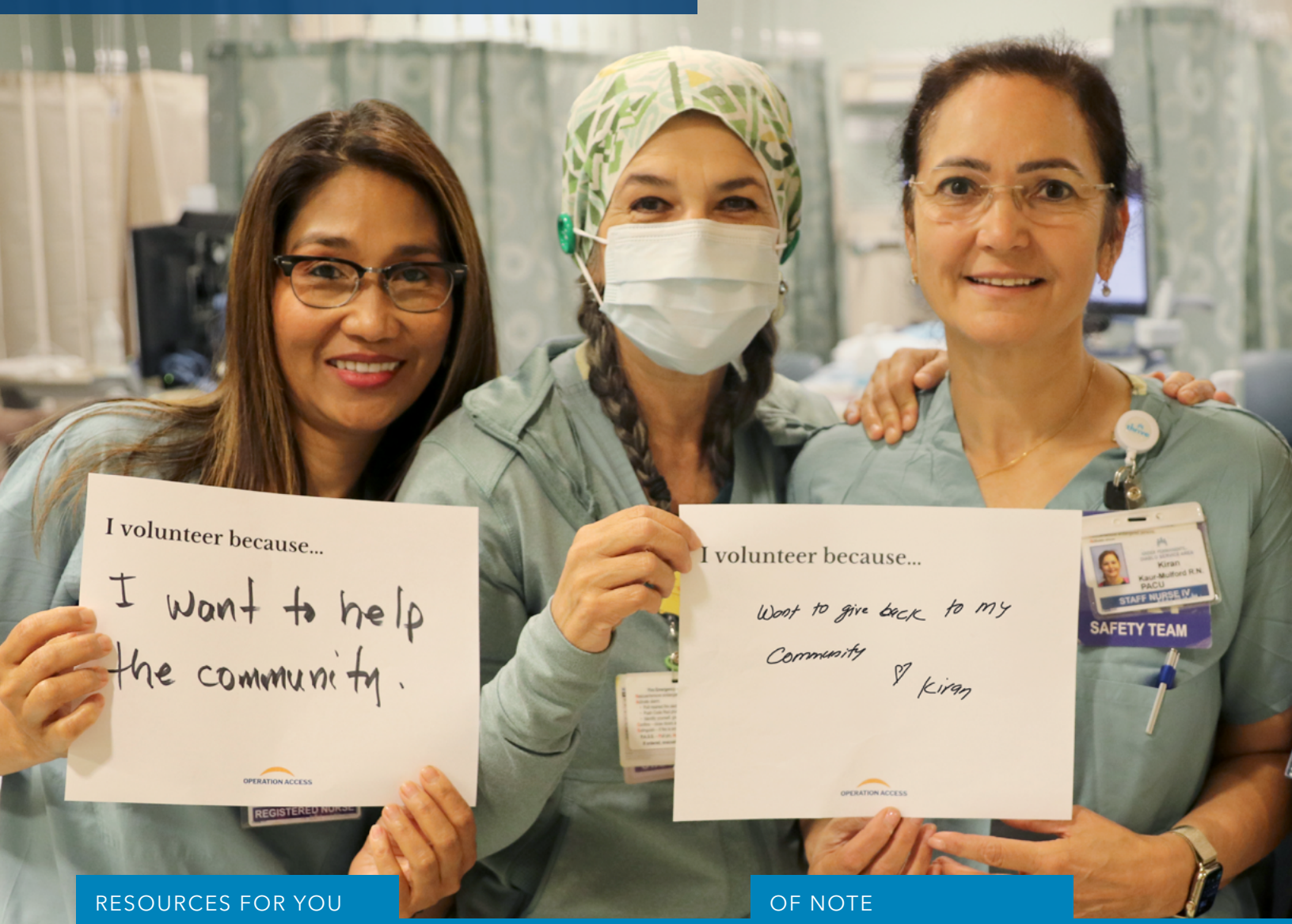
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Virtual Reality enhances Periop 101 Training Program

This immersive program introduces the learner to the names of instruments through drag-and-drop gamification and to the function and order of use of instruments and sterile items during surgical procedures through immersive VR. “My recent case was an ortho case and although I found it complex, I felt the VR helped me recognize many of the instruments,” said **Michael Tam, RN**, a recent Periop 101 graduate who was hired at the Redwood City Medical Center.

Since 2016, 10 Kaiser Permanente Northern California Perioperative Departments have participated in the regional program with 58 RNs trained. Thirty experienced RNs were accepted into cohorts 9 and 10 in 2023.

Walnut Creek PACU nurses **Carolina Palermo, RN, Anna Carrick, RN, and Kiran Kaur Mulford, RN**, pictured during an Operation Access event.



RESOURCES FOR YOU

OF NOTE

Healing Circles

By harnessing the healing power of community, Healing Circles cultivate a sense of shared purpose and shared values, while establishing a safe construct for doing so. In Healing Circles, colleagues heal together.

Ask to have one in your medical center by contacting:

Erica D. Hooper, DNP, RN, CNS, CNL, PHN
Regional Program Manager,
Community Health and Academic Relations
NCAL Regional Patient Care Services
Caritas Coach & HeartMath Certified Trainer
Erica.D.Hooper@kp.org

Upcoming Events

20 DECEMBER

Virtual HeartMath: Relational Energetics

10-12 JANUARY

Caritas Coach Education Program (CCEP)

Please contact Rayne.Soriano@kp.org for more information

JANUARY

Nurse Residency Program

Application window for Cohort 9 will open in Jan. 2024, for a June start.

Check NursingNCAL.kp.org for event listings