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The Gateway is published monthly by the Public Affairs Department for Kaiser Permanente employees, physicians and volunteers in the San Francisco Service Area.

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COMMUNITY BENEFIT

Training for the future

A few, short blocks from the medical center sits the Western Addition neighborhood, where daily challenges for residents include a lack of nutritional food options and limited access to health care.

Thanks to a pilot program between the medical center's Health Education Department and the Women's Community Clinic, young women from the Western Addition who are interested in becoming health care professionals can take part in the Western Addition Health Training Program.

"We are very excited to partner with the Women's Community Clinic and bring these talented and eager women to experience work life at Kaiser Permanente," said **Yvonne Gallot, MPH**, director, Health Education. "The women who will be taking part in the program are very interested in a number of health related issues, including nutrition and health care access, which are pressing concerns in their neighborhood."

Working with colleagues at the Women's Community Clinic, the Health Education

Department has created a curriculum for the women to follow with skills and information which can then be brought back to their community.

"The program focuses on mentoring and training for women as they begin to consider which area of health care or community work they would like to enter," said **Carlina Hansen**, executive director, Women's Community Clinic. "We aim to pair each woman with a health care counterpart who can teach her skills that she can then use to enhance life in her community."

The Women's Community Clinic conceived the idea for the training program nearly three years ago when they assessed that they might be falling short of serving the Western Addition neighborhood.

"The current location of our clinic on



Hayes Street is close to the Western Addition, and we realized we provided relatively low service to the residents who live there, but we learned there is a big need for women's health services," said Hansen.

The Women's Community Clinic will move to a new location in the coming year across Geary Boulevard on Fillmore Street, which is even closer to the Western Addition.

"There is great enthusiasm for the program in our department and we are looking forward to assisting the young

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WORKPLACE SAFETY

A meeting of minds

Taking their seats around the table, it appeared as if great heads of state were meeting to discuss the fate of the world's nations. In reality, the folks gathered at the conference room table on the fifth floor of the hospital were there for only a slightly less important reason: to discuss workplace safety.

A few months ago, the Environmental Services (EVS) Workplace Safety Committee from the Napa-Solano Service Area paid a visit to their counterparts here in San Francisco to see what they were up to across the bay.

"We were very pleased to welcome them to our facility and share best practices

from both sides," said **Mary Roman**, co-lead, Workplace Safety, EVS. "There are always opportunities to learn from each other and this is one of the best forums in which to share what we have in common and also our differences."

The four visitors from Napa-Solano were warmly greeted by Roman, **Kevin Mischal**, co-lead, Workplace Safety, EVS, and several other members of the San Francisco EVS Workplace Safety team.

It was obvious that participants from both service areas had much to share regarding workplace safety improvements, innovative equipment, and the challenges of creating a culture centered on safety.

"We've only seen happy people here in

San Francisco," said **Richard Duenas**, who works the night-shift for the Napa-Solano service area. "It seems that everyone here enjoys their work and feels satisfied."

Manager of EVS for Napa-Solano, **Brenda Robertson**, commented on the colorful and impressive WPS bulletin board that hangs in EVS. "We're very proud to display our accomplishments and good works on the board," said Roman. "We encourage the staff to contribute new ideas and items to the board."

After refreshments were served to the guests, a discussion of the EVS charter began, followed by an assessment of what personal protective equipment was in

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Members of the Kaiser Permanente San Francisco and Napa-Solano EVS teams met to share ideas and exchange best practices.

KP's deep roots with a multicultural workforce date back to early years

Evidence of a diverse workforce at Kaiser Permanente is in the numbers.

Take the ethnic breakdown of Northern California employees, nearly 56 percent of whom are employees of color: 27.9 percent Asian, 14.2 percent Latino, 12.1 percent African American, 1 percent Pacific Islander, .6 percent Native American, and 44.2 percent white. Women account for 79 percent of the workforce regionwide.

KP's employees are more multicultural than its members. Of the 3.3 million members in Northern California, 19 percent are Latino, 8 percent Asian, 7 percent African American, and 66 percent white, according to a 2006 Market Tracking Survey.

KP regularly receives recognition for its support of diversity. Earlier this year for the third year, *DiversityInc* magazine named Kaiser Permanente to its list of the top 50 American companies for diversity and the only one recognized as a top 10 company in four different areas: African Americans, Latinos, people with disabilities, and executive women.

But has KP always been committed to workforce diversity?

Tom Debley, director of Heritage Resources, said support for women, non-white people, and others who have been historically discriminated against began when KP began. That's largely because Henry Kaiser and his eldest son, Edgar, were progressive and open to diverse perspectives, he added.

Diversity Efforts Trace Back to Richmond

Many examples of cultural and racial openness during KP's early days can be found in Richmond.

A nurse there once recalled that in the early 1940s everyone was treated equal in the eyes of physicians and nurses. They took care of workers, first come, first served.

Richmond began a women's clinic and also showed sensitivity toward other workplace needs. For example, women welders were quitting at a high rate so KP recommended creating an expanded training program, which was successful in boosting retention.

Also in the 1940s, Richmond hired the organization's first interpreter. Bilingual in Chinese, she was a conduit for many employees who didn't speak English.

"It is our first known example of cultural sensitivity," Debley said.

Formalizing KP's Commitment

KP has long been viewed as a diversity leader nationally.

In 1961 President Kennedy tapped Edgar Kaiser to serve on the President's Committee on Equal Employment. The year before Kaiser's appointment, KP had voluntarily implemented an affirmative action program.

As society's approach toward diversity matured, so did KP's.

Starting in the 1970s, KP began to formalize its high regard for multiculturalism. It took shape as anti-discrimination policies, internal diversity awards, domestic partnership benefits, and staff associations, among others.

Northern California was the first region to have employee associations. The KP African American Professional Association was the earliest, established in 1990. The following year, the KP Latino Association formed. In the mid 1990s, associations for Asians and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community came on board. Around the same time KP Pride, the LGBT association, formed, KP granted domestic partnership rights.

"Kaiser Permanente's multicultural staff associations are a critical part of the diversity infrastructure, and a primary source of cultural expertise and diversity advocacy," said **Edgar Quiroz**, director of Workforce Diversity, Program Offices. "Kaiser Permanente's staff associations create a tremendous resource for both the organization and the workforce."

Bumps in the Road

The road toward embracing diversity has been mostly smooth, but not always.

In 2000, Disabled Rights Advocates sued KP over access issues.

A settlement was reached the following year resulting in wheelchair accessible scales, adjustable exam tables, and tools for the hearing impaired, among other services KP is still implementing. Officially recognized in 2001, the Kaiser Permanente



Employees with Disabilities Association has helped KP comply with the agreement.

Life hasn't always been easy for other groups as well. For instance, many LGBT employees have been uncomfortable stating their sexual orientation but as society has become more accepting so has the workplace, said **Michael Allerton**, regional HIV policy leader.

The LGBT community at KP experienced a triumph in 2005 when **Judy Lively, MD**, an employee since 1989, then known as Judson, transitioned from male to female. The PIC in the Diablo Service Area received hugs, enthusiastic applause, and open support from colleagues, co-workers, and her boss, **Robert Pearl, MD**, executive director and TPMG CEO, when she announced her intention to return to work as Judy.

In recent years, the diversity efforts have focused on being culturally sensitive to patients. But it begins with employees.

"Unless we have the right workforce, one that sees it as its mission to stretch to serve the needs of an increasingly diverse membership, we cannot lead the market in this domain," said **Katherine Haynes Sanstad**, regional executive director, Diversity. "That means ensuring that our current workforce has the skills to provide excellent service, the tools needed to ensure things like language access, and the desire to bridge socio-cultural gaps." ■

WORLD CLASS CARE

Cultural competence reinforced by new law



Carolyn Wang Kong started interpreting for her grandmother when she was 8 years old.

Years later, she found a Shanghai-educated doctor at the Daly City medical office building who was accepting new patients.

"I took my grandmother to the appointment and it was the first time in almost 25 years that I didn't have to say anything during the encounter," said Wang Kong. "Instead, my job was to be the granddaughter."

It was also the first time that Wang Kong's grandmother—typically distrustful of physicians—opened up to a doctor.

"My grandma went from relying on me to convey information—probably about 30 percent of which was accurately communicated—to being in full control of her health care experience."

Today, Wang Kong is a practice leader in KP Northern California Diversity's Language Access team. She and her colleagues are passionate about the vast array of language assistance KP provides.

KP's Many Services

Over the years, KP has instituted a robust offering around language access.

KP's Institute of Culturally Competent Care was founded in 1999 to ensure the best experience at KP for all members. Primary care language modules provide services—from MDs to social workers—tailored to specific communities, and include the Chinese module in San Francisco and Spanish module in Richmond, to name just two.

"These clinics offer comprehensive care in members' languages," explained Wang Kong. "It's an upward trend, too, with more of

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Breastfeeding 101: KP ahead of the class

Breastfeeding is good for babies. Fewer colds, fewer allergies, fewer infections, less risk for serious diseases.

New studies come out daily, it seems, espousing the benefits of nursing, which is why Kaiser Permanent encourages new moms to breastfeed their babies whenever possible.

Indeed, the number of breastfed newborns at Kaiser Permanente hospitals in the Northern California Region exceeds the state average.

The hospital-rating Web site *CalHospitalCompare.org* recently added maternity care to the list of medical services for which it compares hundreds of California hospitals. The watchdog group rates hospitals on the quality of care they provide for the conditions with which people are most commonly admitted: cardiac care, pneumonia, surgery, and now maternity care—specifically the rates at which newborns are being breastfed at discharge.

Kaiser Permanente hospitals in Northern California uniformly scored above average or higher for breastfeeding.

KP San Francisco, Hayward, and South Sacramento medical centers

earned “superior” ratings, while KP Walnut Creek, Fresno, Oakland, Redwood City, Santa Clara, Santa Teresa, Vallejo, Santa Rosa, and Sacramento all scored “above average.”

KP hospitals that do not provide maternity and delivery services were not rated.

“We are doing great,” said **Duayna Pucci, RN, MSN, MHA**,

maternal child health director at KP Walnut Creek and a member of the region’s breastfeeding task force.

Pucci said the task force has, over the past few years, helped the region significantly increase the numbers of new moms who breastfeed their babies exclusively.

The region takes a multidisciplinary approach to encouraging breastfeeding in hospitals because while breastfeeding may be good for babies, it is not always easy for moms.



“There can be glitches along the way,” said **Patricia Ross, RN**, a board certified lactation consultant at KP Walnut Creek.

She said fertility treatments, age, breast implants, reduction surgeries, nipple rings, and a host of other issues can interfere with lactation and a mom’s confidence.

That is why abundant resources

exist at KP to support new mothers who want to breastfeed, including prenatal classes and lactation consultants like Ross.

Edward Martin, MD, a pediatrician at KP Vallejo and co-chair of the regional breastfeeding task force, said the prenatal breastfeeding classes are especially important because learning something as “intricate and intimate” as breastfeeding post delivery, when moms are exhausted and recovering from labor, is not ideal.

“We try to give mothers as much

opportunity to learn breastfeeding before they go into labor,” he said.

Expectant moms receive breast exams prior to giving birth to help address any conditions or concerns that could become obstacles. And labor-and-delivery staff encourage new mothers to hold their newborns skin-to-skin during the first two hours of life and as much as possible afterwards.

Several years ago KP stopped accepting promotional samples of infant formula for mothers. Today, baby formula and bottles are almost never found in maternity rooms, and moms don’t go home with formula as an alternative for when they grow tired or frustrated or their babies aren’t taking immediately to nursing.

Dr. Martin said that although these efforts have helped develop a consistent level of maternity care at KP hospitals across the region, there is still work to be done.

Fewer than 20 percent of expectant members enroll in the prenatal classes, he said.

Boosting that number “must be our focus.”

Visit www.calhospitalcompare.org to see the scores by hospital for yourself. ■

WORKPLACE SAFETY

‘E’ is for excellence, too

Sure “E” is for Ergonomics, but it’s also for *excellence* and *effort*, too. In fact, wherever people are working safely in the region, you’ll find the unmistakable face of the Kaiser Permanente Workplace Safety (WPS) campaign: The letter E.

The celebrity vowel has lent its likeness to the E Awards given to medical departments around the Northern California Region that demonstrate effective workplace safety practices and reduce injuries.

And while the award—a bright yellow, plastic E—may be whimsical, the work it represents is not.

That golden letter is a sign people are following

certain workplace safety best practices: Winning departments almost always promote stretch breaks, ensure workstations are ergonomically correct, and hold safety workshops so staff can identify safety risks and learn to prevent them. They post fresh safety tips regularly and encourage staff to get creative toward the goal of reducing injuries.

KP Redwood City’s Home Health and Hospice Department is one of nearly two dozen departments around the region to earn an E Award from local WPS leaders this year.

The department of 45 people, including nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, home health aides, and clerical staff, has experienced only

four on-the-job injuries since the start of 2005.

Department manager **Frances Kopernick, RN**, attributes the success to a growing culture of safety, new equipment, and awareness.

“We encourage people to be aware of their surroundings,” she said, adding that staying alert is especially important because her employees are mobile and have less

control over their work environments, including weather and road conditions.

Kopernick and her WPS team co-chair **George Schneider** also stress the link between fitness and safety, as many E Award winners do.

“If you’re fit and you care about your own wellness, you work more safely,” Schneider said.

The department organized a “Walk Across America” contest recently to encourage activity among staff. Employees used pedometers to track their steps and later mapped out the miles they logged on a U.S. map.

The contest caught the eye of Redwood City Workplace Safety Manager **Tracy Goins**, who awards WPS-friendly departments at her facility monthly.

Goins said she thinks the awards are helping motivate people to eliminate the risk for injuries.

“It helps with morale and puts a positive spin on what they’re doing,” she said.

At KP San Francisco, the Pathology Department was awarded for significantly lowering its injury rate. The department used tried-and-true WPS practices to get there: group exercise, stretch breaks, ergonomic assessments, and safety workshops.

The staff also started “B-Safe,” a Bingo-like game that encourages employees to recognize their colleagues’ safe work practices.

Of course, these are just a few examples of workplace safety practices around the region warranting recognition.

While we can’t share them all here, successful workplace safety practices can be found on the Workplace Safety Web site at <http://kpnet.kp.org:81/wps/mcal/index.htm>. ■



The Health Education Department at KPSF poses with the letter E. The department won an E Award for initiating a medical center-wide fitness challenge it called “KP’s Amazing Race.”

Music for healing

"Music is the balm that heals the forlorn ache of a distant star," wrote poet Don Williams, Jr.

It is also the balm that heals aches closer to home—for instance at Kaiser Permanente medical centers. Both medical research and musicians' experience have shown the benefits of therapeutic music in soothing patients, alleviating anxiety, and managing pain.

When **Beverly Bolinger, MD**, assistant chief of Surgery, witnessed the effects of music on physicians, staff, and patients alike at the KP Oakland Medical Center, she knew it was something that could only enhance everyone's experience in San Francisco.

"When I saw how grounding and calming the music was for patients on the floors and for everyone in the lobby, I thought it would make a big difference in our hospital experience," Dr. Bolinger said.

Now some of that musical medicine has arrived at the San Francisco Medical Center in the form of the musical quartet the Healing

Muses. The all-female quartet will play twice a month for the rest of the year.

"Healing Muses has played at the Oakland Medical Center for many years, and we decided it would be very positive for our physicians, staff, and members to enjoy the benefits of live music,"

said **Barbara Adams**, director, Service, KPSEF.

Music for Healing, a program presented by the Healing Muses, was designed to create a peaceful sound environment for hospitals, clinics, hospices, convalescent homes, retreat centers, and homebound individuals.

Healing Muses uses a combination of medieval, Renaissance, Celtic music, and American folk tunes and spirituals to promote relaxation and reduce anxiety during stressful hospital stays and procedures. "As a cancer survivor I've spent a lot of time in hospitals and clinics," said **Eileen Hadidian**, founder of Healing Muses. "Music would have been a great help during some difficult visits. After



playing in health care facilities for several years, I can see the benefits of music for everyone from physicians to staff, but especially patients," she said.

Other Healing Muses members are harpist **Natalie Cox**, Celtic music specialist **Maureen Brennan**, and vocalist/Celtic harpist **Patrice Haan**. The group's extensive experience enables it to select music that is appropriate as a therapeutic tool to promote healing and reduce pain.

"We're thrilled to have music in both the hospital and the clinic," said **Robert Mithun, MD, PIC**. "It can only enhance the care and service we provide to our members, and create a more relaxing environment for all of us."

Healing Muses debuted at the medical center in July and will continue concerts throughout the year. See the box on left for a full listing of times, dates, and locations.

CDs are also available for purchase in the 2425 Geary Blvd. lobby gift shop. You can learn more about the Healing Muses at their Web site: <http://www.healingmuses.org/> ■

All performances are between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

August

1 2425 Geary Blvd. – Lobby
22 2238 Geary Blvd. – Lobby

September

5 2425 Geary Blvd. – Lobby
19 2238 Geary Blvd. – Lobby

October

3 2425 Geary Blvd. – Lobby
17 2238 Geary Blvd. – Lobby

November

7 2425 Geary Blvd. – Lobby
21 2238 Geary Blvd. – Lobby

December

5 2425 Geary Blvd. – Lobby
19 2238 Geary Blvd. – Lobby

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A meeting of minds

place for employees. While the two service areas have many things in common, the Napa-Solano group did comment on how much larger an area the San Francisco EVS group has to cover.

Napa-Solano has recently engaged in several WPS projects, including body mechanics awareness, safety with medical splashes, and producing a video that presents the safe way to complete a task. The service area has instituted a buddy system for lifting heavy objects, ergonomic in-services, and department huddles to discuss any pressing issues or concerns.

Members from both groups stressed the importance of employees' participation and engagement when making decisions that affected the safety of everyone in their departments.

"When we keep ourselves safe," Roman told the group, "we are better able to provide excellent service to the patients and members."

Overall, the counterparts learned much from the visit and the Napa-Solano team invited San Francisco to visit its site for a similar meeting of minds and exchange of practices. ■

PATIENT SAFETY

Gearing up for step down

Sometimes small changes can make big differences—especially when it comes to patient safety in the hospital.

Thanks to the step down unit initiative, certain patients are now receiving more specific and focused care depending on their condition and needs.

The step down unit consists of nine single-room beds located on 5 Center East, and is fully integrated with other units, services, and departments throughout the medical center. The purpose of the unit is to provide quality care to the patients who are acutely ill and/or recuperating from diagnostic, therapeutic, or surgical interventions.

"The step down unit's major patient population includes those who are medically complex, but need less monitoring than those in the ICU," said **Rosemary Soda, RN**, manager, step down unit and cardiac procedure unit.

Nurses who volunteer to work on the step down unit have the opportunity to enhance their critical care skills and learn new methods of caring for these cardiac patients.

"The nursing practice for these patients is quite specific, as they have post-surgical as well as stabilization and monitoring issues when they come to the unit," said **Marisol Aquino, MA**, charge nurse, CPU.

The step down unit is staffed by nurses who have undergone special training

and demonstrated competency in ventilator management, procedural sedation, pre-and post-pacemaker patients, and hemodynamically stable patients requiring titrating IV drug therapy.

"Our nurses have varying clinical backgrounds," Soda said. "Some of them already had the skills to work on the unit, but just needed department orientation, while others were trained for a higher level of acute patient care."

When a physician designates patients to the step down unit, patients must meet admission criteria before they are transferred. "We are really trying to create as safe a hospital experience as we can for our post operative vascular patients," said Aquino. "And the check-list helps us eliminate the possibility of errors in care."

Working to make patient safety priority number one in the hospital is the goal of such initiatives as the step down unit. Further expansion of the program to other units will help continue to make those goals a reality. ■



Members of the 5 Center East step down unit take care of patients who are transitioning from the ICU to a med/surg telemetry unit in the hospital.

The silent killer

By Noelle Tanas



It's known as a "Silent Killer." It collects the most deaths contributed to cancer behind lung and heart disease in men. Meanwhile, only a third of its victims show symptoms, often when the condition has turned chronic, leaving the other two-thirds unaware, and untreated.

The hepatitis B virus (HBV) contributes to nearly 80 percent of all liver cancers. The Center for Disease Control cites that HBV causes chronic infection, resulting in cirrhosis of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure, and death.

Of all ethnic groups, Asian and Pacific Islanders are most at risk for hepatitis B. Asian and Pacific Islanders are 100 times more likely to suffer from HBV, and four times more likely to die of liver cancer.

The easiest way to prevent hepatitis B is with a vaccine. It is highly recommended that all children and adults are screened and vaccinated. Though it is not curable, hepatitis B is treatable with medications that suppress the infection.

Due to its prevalence in cities such as San Francisco, national and local awareness has

increased in recent years. San Francisco has the highest rate of death by liver cancer in the United States, clearly showing a need for HBV awareness and education.

San Francisco Hep B Free has been promoting awareness, education, and providing free screening and tests throughout the city. The coalition's goal is to develop a comprehensive screening program for the San Francisco API population, which represents 34 percent of the entire Bay Area. Kaiser Permanente, along with many other health organizations have joined together in order to accomplish this goal.

"Local support from all the hospitals in the area is overwhelmingly positive," said **Helen Archer-Dusté, RN, MS, CHC**, assistant administrator, quality and safety and member of the SF Hep B Free coalition, representing Kaiser Permanente.

"We're all saying let's work together," said Archer-Dusté, "and we're committed to sharing our resources and have come up with a common theme, logo, community testing, provider education, and public awareness campaign."

The campaign in San Francisco creates many opportunities for clinicians to manage their patients with greater focus regarding HBV.

"It's increased our awareness in terms of how many of our own members we're screening and how good of a job we're doing," said **Richard Tang, MD**, and SF Hep B coalition member. "We are working within the bilingual Chinese module to screen all our patients. The project is allowing us to take a step back and ask how we're doing as providers and as a health care organization."

Dr. Tang and others say that the next step is to evaluate the data and create a treatment plan addressing specific needs of the condition.

"We screen for many other conditions—HIV, hypertension, diabetes—so it's time that we expand testing people for this preventable and treatable condition," said Dr. Tang. "The Hep B Free campaign is going to increase the numbers beyond what we could have imagined and, as a result, save lives." ■

2008 San Francisco Pride celebration and parade

It's official. Kaiser Permanente had the largest marching contingent of any corporation in the 2008 Pride Parade, which took place on Sunday, June 29 in San Francisco. Clad in sky blue shirts, holding signs with healthy and family-centered messages, and following an impressive float with local, regional, and national leadership waving from "Painted Ladies" Victorians, the marching volunteers were an impressive site. At one point, the marchers nearly spanned an entire block of Market Street to the delight and cheers of the gathered crowds. With over 295 volunteers, in both the parade and at the celebration, this year's involvement was truly impressive and broadcasted the 2008 theme "Home is Where the Health Is," loud and clear. ■



The impressive view of the Kaiser Permanente float and marching contingent.



George Halvorson, CEO and president of KFJ/HP, and Ron Knox, sr. vice president for diversity, share a smile on the float.



The banner says it all: We marched for family, friends, and health.



Kaiser Permanente "brand ambassadors" at the post-parade celebration distribute eco-friendly sunscreen and lip balm to the crowds.

How UBTs will guide KP into the future

Interview by Glenda Carroll, Communications Manager, NCAL Labor Management Partnership

Northern California along with the rest of Kaiser Permanente has an ambitious goal for 2010—the establishment of unit-based teams (UBTs) for those represented by the Partnership unions and the physicians and managers who work with them. UBTs are teams where everyone has a say in their work and work environment. By including the experience and skills of frontline workers, the quality of patient care, as well as our service and performance, will be enhanced.

Recently, we sat down with **Ed Porter**, executive director, NCAL LMP, to learn more.

I've heard of UBTs, but I'm not sure what they are and what they do. UBT stands for unit-based team. This puts a name to what we are already doing. A few years ago, these teams were called unit councils or department based teams. In the past, they didn't include everyone. But with unit-based teams, everyone is involved. Together, from the beginning, the teams identify areas needing improvement. Everyone has a say in the solution. Many of the areas they work on are aligned with regional priorities like attendance, service, workplace safety, or access. These teams have a common definition and their results are measurable. That way we can compare teams across the region. So a UBT in Fresno would be the same as a UBT in Santa Rosa.

Why are UBTs so important? The next few years will be challenging for Kaiser Permanente. We're challenged by cost and competition as never before. UBTs will help us combine the knowledge, experience, and skills of our employees so we can deliver the very best care and service possible. When people want to come to work, when they want to do the very best they can, overall performance improves. Our members see that.

The community sees it. Our competitors see it.

There are teams in place now. What has been learned from these first teams? It really began years ago when we framed the vision of the Labor Management Partnership and our common goals. Now we are building on earlier LMP efforts and focusing more on frontline involvement in performance improvement.

Every unit starts at a different place and they are all on their own unique path. On our Web site, we have a series called "Unit-Based Teams Road to Success." We learn something new from each story. In Richmond, for example, when the EVS Department started its UBT, no one in that department really knew what unit-based teams were. But labor and management took those important first steps to work together and the results have been impressive. Absenteeism and overtime were reduced, cleanliness scores jumped by more than 20 percent, and morale improved.

Generally speaking, we have learned that successful teams have strong manager-steward relationships, their leaders are visibly involved, and the entire unit is involved in identifying areas to improve, understanding data, and doing small tests



Ed Porter, executive director, NCAL LMP

of change that build to big results.

The National Agreement for Partnering Employees calls for unit-based teams to be the way Kaiser Permanente does business by 2010. That's only two years away. How will we meet that goal? A recent nationwide UBT assessment and inventory showed that there are 352 work units already functioning as unit-based teams, about 27 percent of our goal. Local facilities are making plans this year to launch an additional 300 teams. In 2009, there will be more than 960 UBTs

in place. We're projecting that by the 2010 deadline, we'll have almost 1,300 UBTs across the region.

What's your advice for those just getting started in UBTs? This is a journey. Establishing relationships and building a team is not always going to be easy or fun. But if you keep the principles of the Partnership in mind—like respecting other people's opinions even when you disagree—you'll make it through those hard times. When your UBT is up and running, you'll find just how rewarding it can be. Unit-based teams are a real opportunity for us and our members. ■

SPONSORSHIP

Kaiser Permanente's deep dive into sponsorship helped U.S. Olympic team get to Beijing

Part of the fun of the Olympics is watching behind-the-scenes stories about the athletes.

The back story for the American diving team at the 2008 Beijing Olympics probably won't be told.

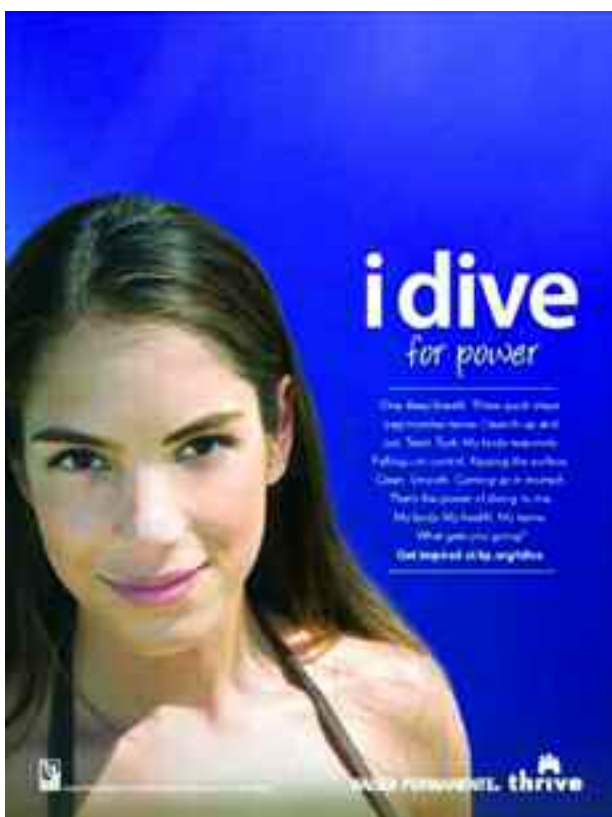
Unless you work at Kaiser Permanente.

KP played an important role in getting the team ready for the big event.

KP has been the official sponsor of U.S. Diving and, since 2006, has been the title sponsor of the annual U.S. National Diving Championships, one of the biggest diving events of the year. But KP is not

sponsoring the Olympic team and its multiple-year sponsorship ended after the July national championships.

"We made the decision to use



our resources to help get U.S. divers ready rather than do as so many sponsors do—wait for the Olympics and then step in as a last-minute,

high-visibility team sponsor," explained CEO **George Halvorson** in a June 6 e-mail to employees. "I think that our visibility may be a bit lower than theirs, but our impact on the actual competition is probably greater."

Tom Carter, VP of sales and broker relations for California, said KP chose diving in part because it represents the essence of a "thriving" lifestyle, including dedication, discipline, and a passion to be the best.

Carter said to compete at an Olympic level, "It's about mind, body, and spirit, all being aligned."

KP donated medical supplies and provided tents with food at competitions so the divers would be in top condition, Carter added.

This past July, the Kaiser Permanente National Diving Championships, a six-day competition, was at the Rose Bowl Aquatic Center in Pasadena, Calif.

In 2007, when the competition was held at Stanford University, KP put on

a Thrive celebration featuring Olympic medal winners such as Greg Louganis, Dr. Sammy Lee, and Bob Webster. Cynthia Potter, bronze medalist and NBC commentator, helped host that event. **Bernard Tyson**, executive vice president, health plan and hospital operations, and Carter presented lifetime achievement awards to two legendary divers, Dr. Lee and Velma Dunn Ploessel, a medalist in 1936. They were recognized both for their achievements at the Olympic games and for their lifelong dedication to the sport.

KP also has personal ties to the diving community. **Dr. Carol Ishimatsu**, a pediatrician at the Downey Medical Center in Southern California, has two daughters who are championship divers. Both participated in the Olympic Trials, and Haley, 15, is going to the Olympics.

For more information on KP's sponsorship, go to www.kp.org/idive. ■

BEST OF CLASS

KP Northern California racks up honors

Early summer saw the Northern California Region honored on a number of fronts



Top Value

eValue8 is a tool developed by the National Business Coalition on Health to help large purchasers of health care shop for value. That value, as it turns out, is Kaiser Permanente—in both Northern and Southern California.

Both regions exceeded last year's overall performance and continue to significantly lead competitors in all categories.

This year, health plans were evaluated on their performance in seven categories: core plan administration [the plan profile]; consumer engagement; provider measurement & rewards; pharmaceutical management; prevention & health promotion; chronic disease management; and behavioral health.

Specifically, the Northern California Region was the national benchmark for plan profile. KP's greatest improvements, over last year, were in plan profile, with Northern California shooting from 67 points last year to 95 points this year. Learn more at <http://www.evalue8.org/eValue8/index.cfm>.

We're Diverse

DiversityInc magazine named Kaiser Permanente to its list of the nation's top 50 companies for diversity. More than 350 companies competed for a spot on the list. This is the third year KP has been included.

A 10-year-old publication that began online and started a print magazine in 2002, *DiversityInc* tracks diversity in the workplace.

Its rankings are derived from corporate responses to questions regarding their chief executives' commitment to increasing diversity within the labor force, training, and diversity among suppliers. Read more at <http://www.diversityinc.com/public/3334.cfm>.

A Gold Standard

A new national report that rates hospitals on health care and non-discrimination policies of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans gave Kaiser Permanente tops marks.

Of the 88 participating hospitals, 31 were KP. Each participating KP hospital met all 10 of the measures. Of the remaining 57 non-KP hospitals, only 14 met every criterion.

The report, called the Healthcare Equality Index (HEI), was issued by the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender civil rights organization.

The HEI strives to call attention to discriminatory practices and over time establish a "gold standard" of policies ensuring equality in treatment. The 2008 HEI is available online at www.brc.org/hei.

Going Green

Kaiser Permanente received several awards for environmental excellence recently from Practice Greenhealth.

The System for Change award recognizes health care organizations that encourage eco-friendly practices and see the connection between the environment and health.

In addition to the System for Change award, Kaiser Permanente facilities and regions across the country received 11 awards recognizing their efforts to reduce waste and prevent pollution. The awards include Partner for Change Award, Making Medicine Mercury-free Award, and Partner Recognition Award. Read more at <http://cms.b2e-online.org/awards/2008winners>. ■

A selection of health care observances

JULY

Week-Long Observances

- 6-12 Therapeutic Recreation Week (National)
- 20-26 Hospitality House Week (National)

Recognition Days/Events

- 18 Dental Awareness Day

AUGUST

Week-Long Observances

- 1-7 Breastfeeding Week (World)
- 3-9 Health Center Week (National)

Recognition Days/Events

- 3 Kids Day (National)
- 23 Health Unit Coordinator Day ■

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Cultural competence reinforced by new law

these modules popping up in the region."

KP's award-winning, national Qualified Bilingual Status (QBS) program was started in 2003 in Northern California, which is now the program's largest employer with nearly 3,400 professional interpreters.

Services for hearing- and sight-impaired members range from TTY phone numbers for text messaging to large print and assisted listening devices. Printed materials are also in dominant languages such as Spanish and Chinese.

In addition, nearly half of the region's physicians have some knowledge of a language beyond English—ranging from Tagalog to Russian—giving them the ability to personalize care in an increasingly complex and competitive industry. Later this year, a cutting-edge program launches for nurses who are qualified to use language skills on the job, significantly increasing the quality of the patient experience.

This commitment to the members' experience is extending even further this year with the passage of a California law requiring that by Jan. 1, 2009 California commercial health plans provide language assistance services to enrollees with limited English proficiency, or to those who have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

As a result, the Department of Managed Health

Care (DMHC) language assistance requirements will dictate that all health plan employees who work directly with members and patients will be trained in 2008 about KP's language services, and each employee and physician at Kaiser Permanente will have a legal responsibility to help members access language services when they need them.

"This law allows us to go to the next level of leading the health care industry in providing language access," explained **Katherine Haynes Sanstad**, regional executive director, Diversity.

Going Beyond Following the Law

"We will need to make sure that we are asking members about their language preferences," said Wang Kong. "And if they need interpreter services, we will need to make sure we are providing those services in a timely way."

Referencing the work done by KP in the '90s to provide language access to members, Haynes Sanstad said, "We aren't starting from ground zero. We have a lot of things already in our favor when it comes to leading in this area, including already knowing the language preferences of 90 to 95 percent of our members."

More important than what KP and its employees and physicians will be required to do by law, though, is what the organization wants and needs to do.

For employees such as **Sebastian Romeo**, a learning consultant in the LMP Bilingual Employee Program, language access is personal.

"Being a first-generation Italian-American, first-born, and having a pre-med background gave me the triple whammy when it came to health care of my parents and grandmother," said Romeo. "Since interpreting services were not available, not only did I have to interpret to my family's dialect, I then had to explain all the other medical jargon to them as well as to my English-speaking siblings. I am so thankful that these types of services are available to our members so that family members don't have to include an additional level of stress when a loved one is sick."

It's also good business for KP.

"We are part of the world economy, and what the new law does is give us some additional tools and resources to allow everybody within KP to participate in that global village and to be able to serve everybody who comes through our doors," added Haynes Sanstad. "Pretty soon a third of California's population will be foreign born, and our Asian and Hispanic populations are rapidly increasing. For KP to grow, we need to ride the wave of growth in these segments: We have to be good at this. It's not optional." ■

Proud (and healthy) to be a quitter



Lee O. Crawford proudly stands next to a smoke-free sign on O'Farrell Street. He has been smoke-free himself for over two years.

Happy to be alive. That's how **Lee O. Crawford**, a shuttle bus driver at the San Francisco Medical Center, feels after sustaining injuries from a near-death motorcycle accident last August. But before his accident, Lee took charge of his health by saying no to cigarettes and quitting after smoking for nearly 20 years.

"I lost my mother to cancer, and my sister, and both of them were smokers. I quit smoking before my sister died, but she was already pretty sick when I did. I spoke to one of the nurses who was giving her chemotherapy and he said I should have myself tested in case something was running in the family. He thought smoking definitely had a lot to do with why my mother and sister got sick.

*When I finally decided to quit, I ran into **Tim Regan, MSW**, who's a clinical health educator, and he took me to his office, explained everything to me, prescribed some medicine, and within seven days, I had stopped smoking. It's one of the best things I've ever done. My kids and my brother are very happy that I'm not smoking, and I can breathe much easier since I stopped.*

People ask me if I ever wanted to start smoking again, like when I had my motorcycle accident or when my sister died, but I said 'no way.' Once I decide to give something up, that's it.

Smoking is bad all around and I'm glad we don't allow cigarettes around any of our buildings. Overall, I feel very blessed to be alive and healthy, and to not be a smoker anymore." ■

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Training for the future

women as they fulfill their goals in becoming health care professionals," said Gallot.

Hansen and her colleagues are thrilled that the program fills the gap between youth programs and women in their early twenties, where there is a decided lack of initiatives. A key component to the program is that the women are paid for their work and not expected to take on several other jobs to support themselves during the training.

"It's very important to give these women that extra support they need to become well-trained and fully working members of their community, and this program, ideally, does just that," said Hansen. ■

Beat the burn this summer

By Noelle Tanas

Things are heating up around Kaiser Permanente San Francisco, literally. Summer sunshine and higher temperatures have people itching to spend more time enjoying the outdoors. But the increased intensity of the sun coupled with extended time spent outdoors can often result in painful sunburns if you do not take precautions.

"The incidence of melanoma—the most deadly form of skin cancer and one of the deadliest cancers in human beings—is increasing alarmingly," said **Inder Dhillon, MD**, physician lead, Cosmetic Dermatology. "The reason for this is simple: increased skin exposure."

According to Dr. Dhillon, besides causing skin cancers, the sun also gives us age spots and wrinkles. So to stay alive and to stay young-looking, protect yourself from the sun.

"I don't say never go into the sun. We all love the outdoors," added Dr. Dhillon. "And the Bay Area is an incredible place to enjoy being outside. Just follow the sun-protection guidelines for safety."

The Skin Cancer Foundation cites that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer during their lifetimes. Kaiser Permanente wants to keep you safe and burn

free. So slap on a hat, slather on some sunscreen, and follow these sun-safety tips.

- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 or higher every day, no matter the weather.
- Apply sunscreen 15 minutes before going outdoors and reapply every two hours.
- Seek shade between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. when the sun's rays are at peak intensity.
- Cover up with protective clothing, sun glasses, and a hat.
- Don't forget your ears and lips need sunscreen too!
- See your primary care provider for a full skin exam once a year.

For more sun safety information, go to www.skincancer.org/prevention/scf-tips. ■



Update: KP San Francisco Dragon Healers

By Noelle Tanas



Never one to shy away from a challenge, **Kathy Pollonais-Britt, MSW**, social work, NICU, is looking to create the first corporate competing breast cancer survivor team in the United States.

"In the U.S. there are 18 breast cancer crews, but no corporate breast cancer crews," said Pollonais-Britt.

Dragon boating has been a growing activity for breast cancer survivors because its strenuous repetition improves paddlers' strength, fitness, muscle mass, and immunity. It also allows survivors to connect with other cancer-survivor paddlers from around the world.

As a board member of the California Dragon Boat Association, Pollonais-Britt is leading team building workshops at such diverse corporations as Google, Intel, and Text 100. "Lots of companies are looking for ways to engage their workforce in positive and collaborative activities. Paddling a dragon boat is an excellent way to do just that," said Pollonais-Britt.

Members of the San Francisco team, the Dragon

Healers, will be participating in races at the Long Beach Dragon Boat Festival in July, and Pollonais-Britt will work with Kaiser Permanente San Diego to help develop a dragon boat team for that facility as well.

Several healers will also be taking part in a South American adventure, and travel to the Peruvian section of the Amazon River in September for a three day, 135-mile race against other teams from around the world. "We hope to have the Kaiser Permanente flag waving from our hand-crafted raft and also to contribute something to the villages we pass along the way," said Pollonais-Britt.

Don't miss the KPSF Dragon Healers at this year's San Francisco International Dragon Boat Festival, taking place the first weekend of October (4-5) on Treasure Island. For more information about the Dragon Healers or about joining the breast cancer survivor crew, contact Kathy Pollonais-Britt at: Katbleen.Britt@kp.org or 415-833-4235.

To view the KPSF Dragon Healers web site go to: <http://kpbealers.com/> ■