

Surfing for Life

Kaiser Permanente sponsored the 20th annual Kahuna Kupuna surf contest in Pacifica, California, for surfers over age 40. Pictured, Emily Flannagan performs a cross step maneuver on her long board in an early heat of the contest.

Kaiser Permanente Northern California member Mark Shotwell believes that his lifelong passion for surfing makes all the difference in the world when it comes to aging gracefully and maintaining mind and body health.

Shotwell took to the waves in the 20th annual Kahuna Kupuna surf contest in Pacifica, California, earlier this month, sponsored for the first time this year by Kaiser Permanente. The contest is the primary fundraiser for Pacifica's Environmental Family, a nonprofit that promotes and protects natural resources in Pacifica. Proceeds from the sponsorship underwrite some of its operating expenses.

The surf contest is just one way Kaiser Permanente supports the well-being of the communities it serves. Physical activity and protecting the environment are important elements of that mission, according to Randy Wittorp, Kaiser Permanente Public Affairs director in San Francisco.

"We believe the outdoors is an essential component of total health," said Wittorp. "We encourage people to go outside and engage with nature while spending time with friends and family. What better way to thrive?"

As a surfer, Shotwell said he feels fortunate to participate in a healthy activity that also fosters environmental awareness.

"Surfing gives us phenomenal exercise, grounding, stress release, and a deep connection to nature and the environment," he said. "Many of us see ourselves as stewards of healthy beaches and waters because our personal lives are so connected and dependent on these resources."

Contest organizer Roy Earnest said this year's 90 contestants competed in heats mostly designed for surfers over age 40.

"The contest is intended to inspire the general public to live healthy lifestyles as they grow older and to shine a spotlight on the growing number of older surfers who want to keep surfing for many years to come," he said. "And we are thrilled Kaiser Permanente is one of our main sponsors this year."

See the slideshow below highlighting the day's event.