



SHIRLEY S. PAULSON, RN

STRUCTURAL EMPOWERMENT

Kaiser Permanente is dedicated to the professional development of nurses. This journey begins during their time as students, and continues through a lifetime of learning as a KP nurse. It is essential that we support all nurses in enhancing their clinical expertise as well as their academic preparation.

Mary Jo Williams, MBA, RN  
Managing Director, Medical Group Support Services, The Permanente Medical Group

NURSE SCHOLARS ACADEMY'S SECOND YEAR

Advancing Care Through Academic Progression and Leadership Development

By Lynn Mundell, managing editor, Northern California Communications, and Dolores Radding, senior communications consultant, Northern California Communications



Graduates to Date

Kaiser Permanente's Nurse Scholars Academy helps working nurses earn a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in nursing. The Academy also prepares future nurse executives to lead care in complex health care systems. While only in its second year, more than 365 nurses have increased their knowledge, skills, and experience through this innovative Kaiser Permanente initiative.

It's been less than a year since Rachel Mathison, RN, went back to school for a bachelor's degree in nursing, but she can already see how her classes are changing her nursing practice and her life.

Mathison was a neonatal intensive care nurse at Kaiser Permanente Oakland when she became a nurse scholar. Having received an associate's degree in nursing nearly 20 years ago, she wanted to return to school and advance her education. This year, Mathison was promoted to an assistant nurse manager role.

The academy enables working nurses like Mathison to earn bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in nursing. "I have a bigger picture now," Mathison explained. "My public health nursing class has helped me think more about where my patients go after they leave the hospital. I've always focused on helping the individual or family in front of me, but now I'm thinking about what I can do on a larger scale."

A Growing Success

The primary goal of the Nurse Scholars Academy, which launched in December 2015, is to increase the number of Kaiser Permanente nurses with bachelor's and advanced degrees in nursing. "The vision for the Nurse Scholars Academy is to support nurses in advancing their education and empowering them to innovate and transform the future of Kaiser Permanente caring-healing environments," said Jim N. D'Alfonso, DNP, RN, the program's executive director.

Research shows that hospitals that employ nurses with higher levels of education have better patient outcomes than hospitals that don't. Theresa Brodrick, PhD, RN, vice president, regional chief nurse executive and vice president clinical integration, said it's ultimately "all about the patients."

“Across the country, very few organizations make the kind of commitment to their nurses that we do. We’ve made this opportunity available to our nurses because we know it’s going to have a direct impact on the care of our patients,” Brodrick said.

The largest number of nurses are enrolled in the registered nurse (RN) to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program. The program’s curriculum was developed in partnership with Samuel Merritt University specifically for Kaiser Permanente nurses and includes a mindfulness-based stress-reduction course for self-care.

“In less than two years the program has had phenomenal results,” said Brodrick. “As of December, 254 Kaiser Permanente nurses have enrolled in or received their BSN through this program. We’re just getting started.”



(Left to right) RN-to-BSN students Randy Williams, RN, Dani Rose, RN, Matthew Elliott, RN, Clinton Bailey, RN, and Shelly Kolb, RN, present their poster at the 2017 International Caritas Consortium.

Designed for Working Nurses

D’Alfonso said the program is designed to remove barriers so that Kaiser Permanente working nurses can learn the latest in science, technology, and nursing practice. “We know it can be expensive to go back to school, and it can be difficult to get to classes. We want to make going back to school easy.”

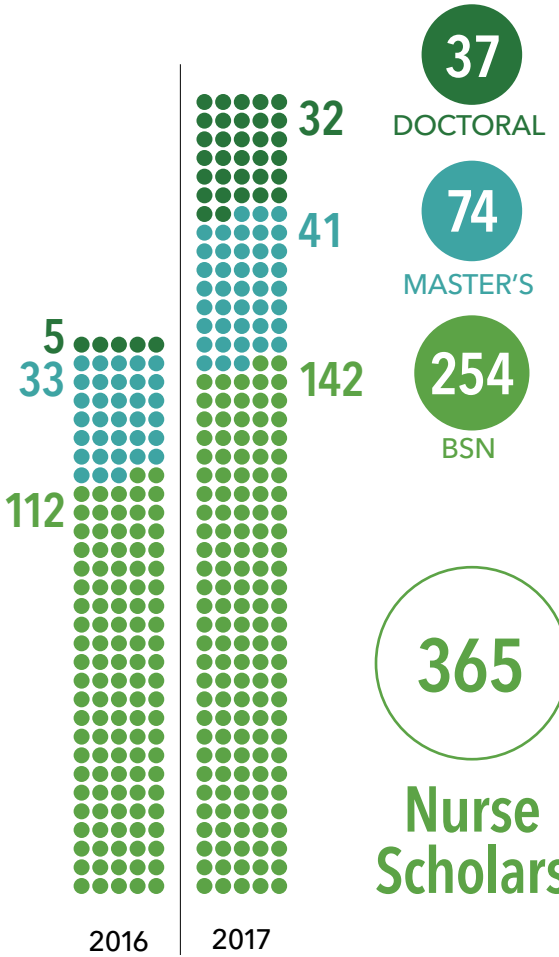
Mathew Elliott, RN, a Kaiser Permanente South Sacramento ICU nurse who graduated from the BSN program in December, said he’s grateful for the opportunity. “It’s enabled all of us to become better nurses, better leaders, and better people,”

he said. “It’s definitely improved the quality of care we provide.” To date, the RN-to-BSN students have completed 34 quality-improvement projects at their local medical centers.

Pursuing the Crown Jewel

Genevieve Wright, MSN, RN, just celebrated her 28-year anniversary as a nurse. But the clinical services director in Maternal & Child Health at Kaiser Permanente San Leandro is hardly slowing down. In fact, she’s earning a Doctorate of Nursing Practice at the University of San Francisco.

“I had never considered getting another degree,” said Wright, who earned both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees over the years while working full time. “But participating in the Nurse Scholars Academy turned on my educational juices.”



Nurse Scholars Enrollment



Theresa M. Brodrick, RN, and Janet A. Liang (far left) join the inaugural RN-to-BSN graduates from the Oakland Samuel Merritt University Campus.

Wright graduated in July 2017 from the program’s Nurse Executive Advanced Leadership Development Program and will receive her doctorate in December 2018. Her ultimate career goal is something she termed “the crown jewel of a nursing career”: chief nurse executive.

“It’s exciting to me that we are moving our nursing practice at Kaiser Permanente to a level of professionalism and opportunity that is the very best one could possibly offer,” added Wright, who said that two assistant nurse managers in her department are enrolled in the BSN program.

“I’ve worked in seven facilities and I don’t know how many jobs, and I’m here to tell you that there is an immense amount of opportunity at Kaiser Permanente,” she said. “A nurse can achieve anything in his or her career at this organization that they put their mind to.”

‘A Labor of Love’

On July 26, 2017, Wright joined 30 employees in downtown Oakland as the programs celebrated the first graduates from the master’s, doctoral, and Nurse Executive Advanced Leadership Development Program.

Northern California President Janet A. Liang, the program’s executive sponsor, described her active role in creating the academy as “a labor of love.”

She told the inaugural graduates, “My hope is that you will touch many lives through your leadership, including our patients and our staff. We are so proud of you and this accomplishment for the future of nursing at Kaiser Permanente.”



Janet A. Liang (far right) and Jim N. D’Alfonso, RN, (far left) stand with the inaugural MSN and DNP graduates of the Nurse Scholars Academy.

# Inspiring Youth to Pursue Health Care Careers

By Anna Fiddler, staff writer, Northern California Communications

More than 300 Bay Area students got a taste of life as a health care professional during a day of hands-on simulations at Kaiser Permanente’s Garfield Innovation Center.

Over a tray of surgical implements, a surgeon and nurse high five. They had just finished closing up a patient after a successful operation. “Good job,” said the surgeon, taking off his surgical mask, braces gleaming.

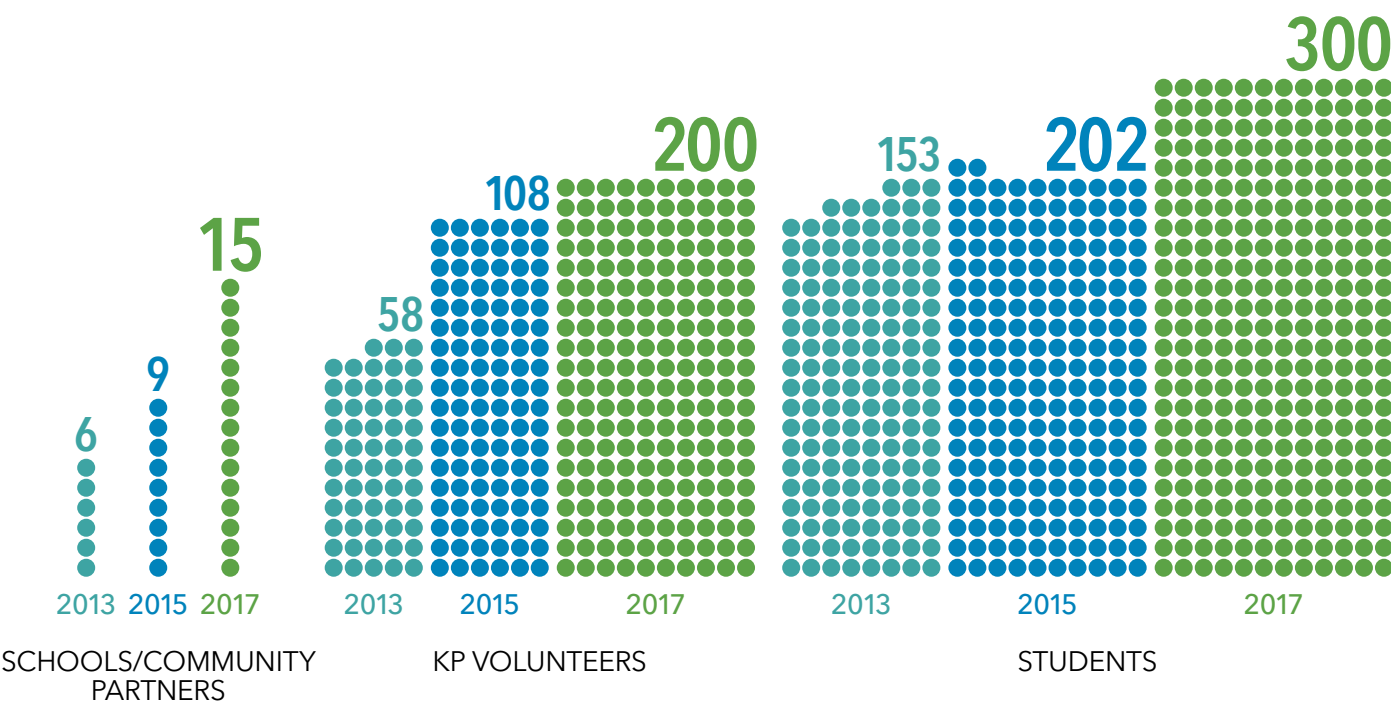
The two were among some 300 students who attended Youth Career Day at the Kaiser Permanente Garfield Innovation Center last spring. The annual event is sponsored by Kaiser Permanente Northern California Patient Care Services and Community Benefit.

Launched in 2013, Youth Career Day exposes underserved youth interested in pursuing health care careers to diverse opportunities through realistic, interactive scenarios and simulations.

“It’s a great opportunity to actually be hands-on and see how hospitals work,” said Winnie Zhang, a senior at George Washington High School in San Francisco, who volunteered to be a nurse in the operating room simulation.

Located in a warehouse district in San Leandro, the Garfield Innovation Center is the largest health care innovation center in the country.

Kaiser Permanente uses the space to test and study innovations through hands-on simulations, prototyping, and new technology being used in medical centers, clinics, and non-traditional settings across the country. It is an ideal setting for students to explore what inspires them in an ever-changing, multidisciplinary field.



Youth Career Day 2013-2017



Nikki B. West discusses healthy eating with Youth Career Day students in the simulated home at the Kaiser Permanente Garfield Innovation Center.

## Experiential Learning

Led by Kaiser Permanente volunteers and nurses, the students had the opportunity to participate in a diverse range of health care scenarios – many beyond the typical hospital setting.

Students participated in a mock surgery in a recreated operating room and witnessed a birth via a simulation dummy. They also reflected upon the importance of a positive bedside manner in a new, tech-savvy Kaiser Permanente hospital room designed to engage patients and streamline workflows. Outside the simulated hospital, students took part in a scripted story tracking mental health services for adolescent depression, and explored healthy eating and living habits in a staged apartment.

“Students can envision themselves in actual settings that represent where health care is going,” said Nikki B. West, Health Care Education Management director at Kaiser Permanente Northern California and co-organizer of the event. “It also encourages young people to expand their notion of future fields of study.”

## Inspiring the Next Wave of Health Care Professionals

Participants in Youth Career Day represented an array of ages and life experiences.

Purushotam Prasai, a PhD immunologist from Nepal, is currently a student at Diversity in Health Training Institute, a program that supports recent immigrants and refugees in the health care field to become credentialed providers in the United States.



Alongside their peers, two Youth Career Day students role play as patient (left) and doctor (right) during a diabetes simulation.



*Jim N. D'Alfonso, RN, oversees an interactive operating room simulation for a group of Youth Career Day participants.*

"It's a wonderful experience to learn at the Garfield Innovation Center and see first-hand how Kaiser Permanente advances medical technology and trains staff," Prasai said.

The event drew the attention of public officials, who came and observed the scenarios.

"A lot of times when our students think about STEM education, they think about programming or engineering. But there are so many opportunities in medicine at all levels to explore," said Mary Nicely, district director for Assemblymember Tony Thurmond.

Theresa M. Brodrick, vice president of Clinical Integration and regional chief nursing executive, agreed.

"We want to invest in our communities, provide a service to them, and hopefully they'll want to work in health care," she said. For educators, Youth Career Day brings together classroom material with real-world application.

"I've visited other career days at hospitals, and they're usually just walkthroughs," said Sue Anderson who teaches a medical careers class at Castro Valley High School.

Anderson added, "But what's so different about Youth Career Day at the Garfield Innovation Center is that the kids get to actually dive into health care practices and experience it for themselves. You can't get that anywhere else."



**94%**  
of Students Had  
a Better Understanding  
of Careers In Health Care

# Developing the Next Generation of Nurses

*By Dolores Radding, senior communication consultant, Northern California Communications*

Kaiser Permanente Northern California's Nurse Residency and Fellowship Program trains new and experienced RNs to fill in-demand positions in nursing. This year alone, more than 131 nurses were supported through a 12-month transition program that prepared them for independent practice in a new clinical area.

As the daughter of two doctors, Marta Gillick, RN, grew up fascinated by her parents' anatomy books. Her father is a surgeon, and Gillick dreamed of becoming an operating room nurse. But when Gillick became a registered nurse in 2014, she said there weren't many opportunities to specialize.



*Tiffany M. Ward, RN, leads a small group discussion with residents and fellows as part of their professional development program.*

Things changed for Gillick in 2016. She began working in a medical/surgical unit for the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Santa Clara and then applied for a training position in Perioperative Services. Now she's on her way to becoming an operating room nurse.

"When I got this opportunity, I thought it was like winning the lottery," Gillick said. "I know there are a lot of nurses out there who would like to move into the OR, so I just feel really blessed."

## Meeting Current and Future Workforce Needs

Gillick is one of 131 Kaiser Permanente Northern California registered nurses who have completed or are currently participating in the organization's Nurse Residency and Fellowship Program offered through its Nurse Scholars Academy. Both programs train RNs to work in specialty departments such as Labor and Delivery or Perioperative Services at one of Kaiser Permanente's 21 regional medical centers.

### What's Unique About Our Program

At Kaiser Permanente, we are taking an innovative approach to transitioning experienced nurses into a new specialty area. Much like new graduate nurses, experienced nurses who are entering a new specialty become a novice again on Patricia Benner's Novice-to-Expert competency spectrum. Kinghorn et al. (2017) identified that formalized Nurse Fellowships may be as important as Nurse Residencies in supporting nurses who are transitioning practice environments. Our 12-month practice transition program supports experienced nurses alongside new graduates in a combined Nurse Residency and Fellowship Program.

“This program is designed to help our medical centers fill current and future nursing positions in specialty care areas,” explained Ryan M. Fuller, BSN, RN, Nurse Residency and Fellowship Program director. “Nursing schools primarily train graduates to work in medical/surgical units, so there’s an opportunity for us to provide formalized specialty training for our new and existing nurses.”

The nurse residency is designed for newly licensed registered nurses as they transition to professional practice, while the nurse fellowship program supports experienced nurses who are interested in entering a specialty practice area.

“We want the best and the brightest practicing in our medical centers so they can provide extraordinary care for our members,” said Theresa M. Brodrick, PhD, RN, Kaiser Permanente regional chief nurse executive and vice president of Clinical Integration. “This program helps us recruit and retain that nursing talent.”

Training Competent and Caring Nurses

The Nurse Residency and Fellowship Program launched in fall 2016, and new training courses start each fall and spring. The program began with a 16-week course for labor and delivery nurses and a 6-month course for perioperative nurses. This fall, a



third course was added for newly licensed medical/surgical nurses, and next spring, a fourth will begin for critical care nurses.

Training classes typically include a mix of newly licensed nurses and experienced RNs who spend three to four days a week in clinical training, working alongside an experienced nurse preceptor at the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center where they were hired.

“This gives our experienced nurses the chance to pass on their knowledge and help build the next generation of professional, competent, and caring nurses,” Fuller said.

The courses also include classroom time led by Kaiser Permanente nurse educators at select locations around the region. Each course is built on curriculum from nationally recognized organizations such as the Association of Operating Room Nurses and includes online learning, lectures, simulations, skills labs, and presentations from experts in their field.



Jez B. Badoy, RN, stands proudly with the residents and fellows from the Spring 2017 cohort of the perioperative training program.



Ryan M. Fuller, RN, leads a discussion with more than 60 residents and fellows from the Fall 2017 cohort of the Nurse Residency and Fellowship Program.

Improving Patient Care

Clinical Perioperative Nursing Consultant Jenny Mendenhall, RN, developed the Kaiser Permanente Perioperative Services training and Regional Perinatal Nursing Consultant Tiffany Ward, RN, developed the training for the Labor and Delivery course. Both say the training programs are having an important impact, and not just on the nurse residents and fellows.

“We have nurses from different facilities across Northern California coming together to train through a standardized program and we are also training their nurse preceptors,” explained Mendenhall. “This raises the bar and benefits everyone in those departments.”

Ward added that when you start teaching residents and fellows the latest evidence-based practices, there’s a ripple effect.

“The preceptors are learning the latest and so are our nurse educators and leaders. All of this is constantly improving patient care, and that’s exciting,” she said.

Preparing for a Dream Career

Nurse residents and fellows also attend a monthly, 12-month professional development program. The program focuses on leadership, quality outcomes, and the professional role of the RN. As part of the program, nurses complete an evidence-based practice project at their medical center.

After the residents and fellows complete their formal training, they continue to work with RN preceptors in their medical centers until they’re ready to work on their own.

Marta Gillick said she’s found her perioperative course challenging, but she feels the training is preparing her well for the career she’s been dreaming of.

“I knew the learning curve was going to be steep, but having the theory, the evidence-based practice, and the hands-on experiences, all the tools we can now put into our professional box, has helped a lot. I’m just happy to be doing this,” she said.

2017 Residents and Fellows by Specialty

