Transformational Leadership

"It’s important to be a good listener. Everything flows from that. Visibility and consistency in leadership is essential. Be open, honest, and transparent. I believe in making people feel good about themselves and their contributions."

Vicky Locey, MSN, MBA, RN, NEA-BC
Chief Operating Officer/Chief Nurse Executive, Santa Rosa Medical Center

Vicky Locey’s National Award
By Lynn Mundell, managing editor insideKP Northern California

Vicky Locey, MSN, MBA, RN, NEA-BC shares her knowledge from decades of nursing and her role as one of the executives in charge at the Kaiser Permanente Santa Rosa Medical Center during the North Bay Fires.

It’s been over a year since devastating fires tore through Santa Rosa and surrounding counties, causing $14.5 billion in damages, burning more than 210,000 acres, and killing 44 people. Within Kaiser Permanente, the impact was felt by employees and physicians who lost homes and saw the evacuation of facilities, including the Santa Rosa Medical Center.

One of the people key to managing the emergency at the medical center was Vicky Locey, RN, chief operating officer and chief nursing executive. She was honored for that work with Kaiser Permanente’s 2018 Outstanding Nursing Leadership Achievement Award for Northern California. Today, hear from Locey, including her advice on how to be an effective leader.

Tell us about your nursing career.
I have been a nurse for 35 years, with 28 of those at Kaiser Permanente. I worked full time while earning my bachelor’s in Nursing, a master’s in Nursing Administration, a master’s in Business Administration, and I am currently applying for a doctorate in Nursing Practice. I have a passion for learning. That is one of the things I love about nursing: There is always something to learn and to be better at.

Your award is for ‘transformational leadership.’ What did that look like in October 2017?
I’ve been in the chief nursing executive role since 2005 and the chief operating officer role since 2011, so I felt solid. That morning of the fires I couldn’t get to the hospital from my home in Windsor, so I worked remotely until the roads were unblocked. What really helped was that I always surround myself with strong leaders by matching the right person with the right job. I build a team I know can get us through anything – and on Oct. 9, 2017 they did.
When you open a new hospital, you have to be better at something, and to be better at it.

— Vicky Locey, MSN, MBA, RN, NEA-BC
Santa Rosa Medical Center

What was it like during the ensuing days?

The Santa Rosa Medical Center has a strong practice around disaster preparedness. All the drilling built that emergency muscle memory we needed. I got to the hospital at 4 p.m. that day and from there on worked relentlessly until we reopened the hospital. Even when staff and physicians knew their own homes were burning, they focused on caregiving and how they could make a difference for our community, including volunteering at local shelters. No one asked them to do that. They just did. We also received incredible support from throughout Kaiser Permanente.

What is it like today?

I definitely feel that our connections and relationships are stronger. More than a year later, we are more patient with one another, more understanding, and more inquisitive about whether others are okay or what they might need. We take it a day at a time. We have a Resiliency Team that has been a tremendous support to our medical center. I know that Kaiser Permanente Santa Rosa can get through anything together. I am amazed at the strength and professionalism of our medical center.

What’s your best advice for other leaders?

I like to recognize individuals and act accordingly. Some people want a big, public thank you. Others just like a handwritten card. Visibility and consistency in leadership is essential. Be open, honest, and transparent. If someone needs an answer and I don’t have it, I will get it for them or we will figure it out together.

What was particularly challenging?

The fires kept popping up in new areas, so you didn’t feel that the disaster was really ending. At one point I suddenly needed to evacuate my home — due to the amount of cleaning and restocking required — in 2 weeks.

The human piece of the disaster was also very complex. People have different responses to trauma. Some were very self-contained; others didn’t want to leave work because it was their safe place. I honored all the differences.

Anita Zuniga’s Retirement

By Jim N. D’Alfonso, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, FNAP, executive director professional practice, leadership development, research, and Nurse Scholars Academy

After 21 years of commitment and dedication to Kaiser Permanente, Anita Zuniga, executive director of hospital operations, retired February 4, 2019. During her tenure at Kaiser Permanente and throughout her career in health care, Zuniga has served with distinction in a variety of leadership roles.

Zuniga was promoted to several regional roles beginning in 2003, including executive director for Regional Patient Care Service (PCS), followed by vice president and chief nurse executive (CNE) for Regional PCS in 2010. In 2015, she transitioned to chief operating officer for Kaiser Oakland Medical Center before returning to Region.

A San Francisco native, Zuniga began her career at St. Luke’s Hospital, where she received her diploma of nursing. She continued her education, completing a BSN at California State University Long Beach and then an MSN at San Francisco State University.

Zuniga’s passion and dedication to nursing supported her steady progression from student to surgical staff nurse, and carried her all the way to vice president of Patient Care at St. Luke’s. Her leadership journey took her to Merrithew Memorial Hospital in Martinez as chief nursing officer (CNO) in 1993, and then Kaiser Permanente as CNO for Walnut Creek and Vallejo Medical Centers in 1997.

As regional chief nurse executive for NCAL PCS for over 12 years, Zuniga championed numerous advancements in nursing professional practice, clinical care, and technology integration. She pioneered a major shift in nursing philosophy and practice through the region wide adoption of Caring Science in 2008, followed by the introduction of HeartMath programs and the establishment of Kaiser Permanente’s annual Caritas Consortium. To this day, Kaiser Permanente Northern California remains the world’s largest Caring Science Affiliate system.

Of her many accomplishments, one of Zuniga’s fondest memories includes enjoying the many stories of compassionate care shared by direct care nurses during the 52 forums she led in partnership with Tim Porter-O’Grady in 2013-2014.

An inspirational role model and mentor to many, Zuniga was honored with the David Lawrence Patient Safety Award 3 times for her work on reducing hospital-acquired infections and the development of Kaiser Permanente’s High Alert Medication Program. As a certified nurse executive, she served on the board for the Association of California Nurse Leaders (ACNL) and was president and board member of the East Bay Association of California Nurse Leaders. Her most treasured accolades include the Daisy Award she received from the Northern California Regional Chief Nurse Executives Peer Group, an honorary Caritas Coach certificate conferred by Dr. Jean Watson, and the ACNL “Excellence in Leadership – North” award in 2014.

Zuniga’s retirement plans include working with her local church’s social justice programs, spending more time with family, taking her dog Bentley to obedience school, and enjoying an occasional cruise to a faraway destination. Please join us in wishing her happy sailing and in extending our heartfelt gratitude for her many contributions to Kaiser Permanente Nursing and patient care in Northern California.
In Memoriam: Celia A. Ryan, MSHA, RN, CPHQ

By Jim N. D’Alfonso, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, FNAP, executive director professional practice, leadership development, research, and Nurse Scholars Academy

On December 22, 2018 friends and colleagues in Kaiser Permanente NCAL learned of the untimely passing of Celia Ryan following a brief illness. Ryan joined Kaiser Permanente in 2002 and held a variety of positions including quality director, assistant administrator of Quality and Service, chief compliance officer, and area quality leader for Kaiser Permanente Fresno. In 2015 she transitioned to Northern California regional offices as executive director of Regional Risk Management and Patient Safety.

Ryan earned a bachelor’s degree in nursing from University of Cincinnati College of Nursing and Health and a master’s of science in Health Care Administration from Virginia Commonwealth University. She began her nursing career at University of Cincinnati Medical Center in 1980 as a staff and charge nurse. She then became nurse manager at University of Michigan Medical Center in 1983 and a clinical supervisor at Veterans Administration Medical Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1991. In 1993 Ryan joined St. Elizabeth’s Hospital Medical Center in Youngstown, Ohio, where she served as a nurse manager, quality manager, performance improvement and support services manager, and a critical care staff nurse before moving to California.

The consummate patient safety leader for Kaiser Permanente, Ryan’s leadership of the infection control program resulted in world-class performance in C-Diff prevention, operating room patient safety, and led to a paradigm shift in maternal child patient safety. Her many accomplishments included leading teams and projects that resulted in awards from The Joint Commission, U.S. News & World Report, American Heart Association, the Hospital Council of Northern and Central California, and The Leapfrog Group.

Ryan partnered eloquently with physicians and through those partnerships created the first and only Behavioral Peer Review scoring system for peer review. Stephen Parodi, MD, executive director for The Permanente Medical Group summed up the sentiments of a grieving regional team by saying, “Celia’s indomitable spirit and laser focus on doing what was right for patients and for each other created a culture of safety that has spread throughout Kaiser Permanente Northern California. Countless lives were saved during her watch, and her spirit lives on because the teams she built will continue to save countless more. We are lucky to have had Celia as a leader, a nurse, a confidant, and a friend.”

So many tributes remember Ryan as a remarkable, loving, compassionate, tenacious, and dedicated nurse executive leader committed to making Kaiser Permanente a better place to work and receive care. She will be deeply missed by all who came to know and work with her during her tenure with us. Our heartfelt condolences go to her family and brother Joe, who is a nurse at Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara.

Kaiser Permanente Northern California Nursing continues to prioritize key programs that advance our current and future nursing leadership workforce. These programs span across the spectrum of leadership, from initial orientation and onboarding of our front-line managers, to the development of our next chief nurse executives.

**New Nurse Leader Orientation (NNLO)**

New Nurse Leader Orientation launched as a new Northern California initiative in July 2018. Since that time, more than 489 nurse leaders have attended the program. The orientation is a 3-day standardized program that examines key competencies of nursing leadership at Kaiser Permanente.

Effective September 2018, all new Northern California nurse leaders attend New Nurse Leader Orientation as part of their 60-day onboarding requirements. In addition, all existing nurse leaders across Northern California will have attended the program so they are able to gain a common knowledge base and awareness of the content that future nurse leaders will receive. By the end of next summer, all existing nurse leaders will have attended NNLO.

**Nurse Executive Fellowship Program**

The Nurse Executive Fellowship program is designed to support aspiring nurse leaders to develop competency and prepare for future nurse executive roles within Kaiser Permanente. In 2018, 2 candidates were successfully promoted into executive positions at the Redwood City and Oakland medical centers.
Amy Young, RN, BSN, MBA
Chief Nursing Executive
Kaiser Permanente Redwood City

“The Nurse Executive Fellowship program was an extraordinary pathway into the Chief Nursing Executive role. It allowed for structured executive learning with curriculum and hands-on, hospital-to-hospital experiences. The ability to learn and experience our hospital operations and practices across Northern California provided real-time scenario opportunities in conjunction with the coursework. I embraced my executive development and have integrated it into my daily operations as a nurse executive at Kaiser Permanente Redwood City.”

Romaoetia L. Lofton, DNP, MBA, RN, NE-BC
Associate Chief Nurse Executive
Kaiser Permanente Oakland

“My experience as a Nurse Executive Fellow was life-changing and an invaluable contribution to my career. The fellowship provided exposure and experience to a variety of leadership situations while offering support and guidance from a skilled mentor and executive coach. During my fellowship I had the opportunity to encounter the culture and leadership in 4 different medical centers. These experiences all contributed to my growth as a nurse executive. Participating in the fellowship adequately prepared me for my leadership role and I will forever be grateful.”

Leadership for Executive Advancement and Development Program (LEAD)
The LEAD program is a 12-month leadership preparation and development program that accommodates 15 to 20 selected candidates within the cohort. The program has been designed using American Organization of Nurse Executive (AONE) and American College of Healthcare Executive (ACHE) competencies along with insights from 2 trusted organizations that acknowledge commitment to excellence in health care and nursing: Baldridge Performance Excellence Program and the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

Participants in the LEAD program are assigned one competency for self-study each month. To guide development, the book FYI: For Your Improvement – Competencies Development Guide is referenced along with assessment results. Initial assessments include Myers-Briggs personality types and the 360° Leadership Circle Profile. The AONE Nurse Executive Self-Assessment is offered to nurse leader candidates after 6 months in the program.

Cohort candidate resources also include experiential activities within 6 learning labs, an executive mentor who helps facilitate their growth, and development coaches who translate assessment results into actionable individual development plans. The LEAD mentee/mentor relationship is built around open, honest communication that nurtures personal and professional growth. It is a mentee-driven, mentor-guided process that is private, focused, and transparent.

Currently, the LEAD program has 14 selected participants: 6 from Patient Care Services, 6 from Continuum of Care, and 2 from Risk, Quality, and Patient Safety.”

Janet A. Liang
President, Northern California Region

“We were taught to be nurse leaders from the very beginning. The environment in the school fostered this.”
– Debra Jones, MSN, RN, Kaiser Foundation School of Nursing Class of 1963

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A LEGACY OF NURSING EXCELLENCE

“At the heart of Kaiser Permanente’s legacy is a nearly 75-year commitment to high-quality, affordable care delivery for our members and the communities we serve. Today nurses, physicians, and employees work in teams across our integrated health system as they transform care delivery through innovation and implementation of evidence-based practices. Our world-class reputation reflects the passionate and dedicated people of Kaiser Permanente.”

– Janet A. Liang, President, Northern California Region

“I think one of the basic skills [of a nurse] is to look at the humanity of the person, respect and listen to the patient.”
– Helen Robinson, MSN, RN, FNP, Kaiser Foundation School of Nursing Class of 1965

“The nurse of the future must exemplify health, and teach it.”
– Dorothea Daniel, EdD, RN, FNP, Founding Director, Kaiser Foundation School of Nursing

“We were taught to be nurse leaders from the very beginning. The environment in the school fostered this.”
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