Kaiser Permanente Brings Teach Flu a Lesson Program to the Antelope Valley

Lancaster, CA (November 26, 2018)—No one wants to be sick, especially during the holidays, which is why it is especially important school-aged children get the annual flu vaccine this fall. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, flu is the leading cause of illness, and last year’s flu season was the deadliest in more than a decade. Young children are especially at risk. The flu spreads quickly in tight quarters such as elementary school classrooms, and children’s developing immune systems may be more susceptible to colds and flu. Children who live in low-income communities may be at even greater risk since their access to health care and preventive vaccines are often limited.

Thanks to the voluntary Teach Flu a Lesson program, thousands of underserved students throughout Southern California received increased protection against the influenza virus this season at no charge. The innovative partnership among Kaiser Permanente, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), 10 school districts, and 11 nursing schools made more than 8,000 flu vaccines available at school-based vaccination clinics. By providing the vaccine to communities with below-average vaccination rates, Teach Flu a Lesson helps ensure the most vulnerable communities can reduce their risk for infection and enjoy better health this winter.

“This program is so important – it is not only about protecting the individual child, but also protecting the school from a larger outbreak, and protecting the student’s family,
including younger siblings,” said Margaret Khoury, MD, pediatric infectious disease specialist and regional lead of the Kaiser Permanente Southern California Flu Vaccination Program. “Reaching out to the community and making protection available to children every flu season is the way to go. Removing obstacles to getting the flu shot is the key to our success and what makes this program a model.”

This year, Teach Flu a Lesson was especially successful because of the return of the FluMist, the nasal spray vaccine option. In collaboration with the CDPH, Kaiser Permanente made both the FluMist and the standard flu shot available to young students with their parent’s or guardian’s permission. Kaiser Permanente also helped to secure assistance from local nursing schools, whose nursing students are administering the vaccines.

This year, 112 Southern California schools hosted the vaccination clinics which included the expansion to 4 pilot schools in the Antelope Valley through a partnership with the Lancaster School District and the University of Antelope Valley where over 160 vaccinations were administered.

“Every year, many students succumb to the flu and miss important time at school,” said Stephanie Pielech, Lead School Nurse, Lancaster School District. “The value of the Teach Flu a Lesson is that it helps ensure access to a flu shot for all of our students keeping them healthy and ready to learn.”

“As we head into the holiday season, the key to staying healthy for children is getting the vaccine, combined with handwashing, and of course healthy eating and sleep,” said Wendy Fuentes, Kaiser Permanente Antelope Valley Flu Coordinator. “That’s the recipe for wellness.”

To learn more about Kaiser Permanente Southern California’s work in the community, please visit http://community.kp.org.

About Kaiser Permanente
Kaiser Permanente is committed to helping shape the future of health care. We are recognized as one of America’s leading health care providers and not-for-profit health plans. Founded in 1945, Kaiser
Permanente has a mission to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of our members and the communities we serve. We currently serve more than 12.2 million members in eight states and the District of Columbia. Care for members and patients is focused on their total health and guided by their personal Permanente Medical Group physicians, specialists and team of caregivers. Our expert and caring medical teams are empowered and supported by industry-leading technology advances and tools for health promotion, disease prevention, state-of-the-art care delivery and world-class chronic disease management. Kaiser Permanente is dedicated to care innovations, clinical research, health education and the support of community health. For more information, go to kp.org/antelopevalley.