

“She gave me back my life.”

South Bay patient and family are grateful for post-stroke therapy



Officer Lameka Bell

In early December 2022, police officer and K-9 specialist Lameka Bell felt some numbness in her hand. Bell called Kaiser Permanente for medical advice. Encouraged to seek care if she experienced any other symptoms, Bell went to the emergency room after having additional feelings that something wasn't quite right.

“My K-9 dogs started bringing me my clothes and cell phone and moving around in circles,” recalls Bell. “When I got to the hospital, that’s when my speech started going bonkers.”

Bell had experienced a stroke that caused aphasia, or the loss of ability to express speech. After a consultation during her stay in the hospital and initial speech assessment/exercise, she began regular speech therapy a couple weeks later.

“[Speech therapist] Lauren Polly is the most wonderful person,” says Bell. “She was extremely encouraging and positive, and her patience and professionalism helped me to see my potential. At first, I could barely talk – but she gave me back my life.”

As a facility dog service officer and community liaison, Bell speaks often with the public. “Speech is my job, and I love what I do,” she explains.

Bell’s husband, Phillip, also saw the improvement in Lameka’s abilities. He remembers, “In the beginning, my wife struggled with all the exercises and would get easily tired. It has only been about 3 months now, and she’s able to speak mostly fluently again.”



“It’s so rewarding to be able to help patients regain lost abilities, and it’s especially gratifying when it’s one of our community heroes,” says Polly. “I’m so proud to be one of Lameka’s partners in health.”

Although numerous diagnostic imaging scans, lab tests, cardiac monitoring, and an ultrasound did not find a clear cause of the stroke, the Bells acknowledge their jobs as a teacher and police officer can sometimes be very stressful, taking a toll on their mental and physical health.



Dr. David Hannauer, neurologist and director of stroke care at Kaiser Permanente South Bay, explains, “If someone is in a chronically stressful environment, that might lead to high blood pressure – which is a huge risk factor. Taking good care of yourself is very important and can make all the difference in avoiding a stroke. This includes things like having a good diet, exercising, keeping your blood pressure under control, treating high cholesterol, and maintaining a healthy blood sugar.”

Phillip reflects, “Lameka’s stroke really called my attention to the need to take better care of ourselves. Taking some time off work to care for Lameka has been good for both of us in managing our health, and we’re making that a priority now.”

What to Watch for: Signs of a Stroke

A stroke is always an emergency situation, and it’s important to get care quickly. Identify stroke symptoms with the acronym FAST:

F — Face. If the person tries to smile, does one side or both sides droop?

A — Arms. When both arms are raised, does one drift downward?

S — Speech. Is the person slurring their words or having trouble speaking?

T — Time to call 911. Call emergency services if you notice any of these signs.

Resources for Managing Stress

Kaiser Permanente offers many resources in addition to appointments, including:

- 24/7 emotional support by text, via the Ginger app (90 days at no cost)
- Wellness coaching & health classes
- Personalized stress management programs
- Tools for mental fitness
- Group therapy
- Access to the Calm and myStrength apps at no cost, to help with sleep, stress, anxiety, and more

Visit kp.org/mentalhealth to learn more.