



35th Anniversary Reflection

The last 35 years have presented both challenge and opportunities, but the people of Kaiser Permanente Woodland Hills and West Ventura have always risen to the challenges and made the best of every opportunity to better care for our members. When we reflect on the past 35 years, we should feel a sense of enormous pride for our tenacity, innovation, and selfless dedication to the high-quality care of every patient we have served.

When the Woodland Hills Medical Center opened on April 11, 1986, the San Fernando Valley and our membership looked very different. In those days, we served just 86,000 members, compared to the over 230,000 we care for now.

“The initial medical office building and our footprint in the area looked much smaller than it does today,” says Gail Knight, chief administrative officer, who came to Woodland Hills in 1989 and has witnessed the immense growth and change since those early years.

Less than 10 years after opening, Woodland Hills Medical Center confronted our first major crisis when the Northridge Earthquake struck. Despite having sustained damage, no piped in water or flushable toilets, we remained open meeting the needs of those affected by the disaster and emerged with a stronger hospital and improved disaster protocols.

Over the coming decades, staff and physicians would show an unwavering commitment to providing the highest quality care as the medical center went on to earn top honors, including: being named by The Joint Commission a "Top Hospital" for our clinical quality on TJC Core measures; being named a Primary Stroke Center by the Join Commission; being named by California Hospital Assessment and Recognition Task Force (CHART) as a top performing hospital; receiving a Bronze Star for our performance as a Stroke Certified Hospital; recognition as a Healthgrades' Top 50 hospital for five consecutive years, as well as being listed among the nation's leading hospitals by US News and World Report and Newsweek in recent years.

“Over the years we have received almost too many honors to count,” explains Murtaza Sanwari, senior vice president and area manager of the Kaiser Permanente Woodland Hills service area, a southern California native whose children were born at the Woodland Hills Medical Center. “The recognition of course is great and much appreciated. But the secret to all this success is the top-quality, evidence-based care we provide every day, by working together as a team.”

The Woodland Hills service area grew substantially in January 2007 with the acquisition of Buena Ventura Medical Group in West Ventura County. Initially starting with around 25,000 members, we have grown to a membership of more than 80,000 in that area. That expansion continued in 2017 with the opening of the Market Street Medical Offices in Ventura which was followed soon after by the opening of our Porter Ranch Medical Offices in 2019. And just last fall, we realized the long anticipated opening of our new state of the art Emergency Department and Operating Rooms at the medical center.

These recent milestones came amidst a global pandemic, the likes of which Kaiser Permanente and the world has never seen before. But once again, we rose to the challenge. Hospital staff worked around the clock providing care, while those working in medical office buildings continued to innovate to ensure care continuity for our members during the pandemic, relying on everything from telehealth to curbside pharmacy delivery.

“The last 16 months has truly been unprecedented,” says Letitia Bridges MD, area medical director. “But the pandemic showed us once again that our care model works: our ability to triage, provide care in remote settings, and work as a team helped us survive the pandemic. Most importantly it was and continues to be the selfless dedication of our people that pulls us through.”

As we continue the celebration of our 35th year which began last month with our commemorative T-shirts and medical center banners, we hope you will take time to review the special section of Voices dedicated to the recognition of this milestone. There you will find a timeline outlining the significant events in the history of Woodland Hills Medical Center as well as an online scrapbook where we will be adding stories and memories throughout the remainder of the year. We also encourage you to consider adding the 35th anniversary logo to your email signature as a way of sharing your pride as a valued member of our Woodland Hills team.

Reflecting on more than three decades of amazing accomplishments, Gail Knight states, “Our people have been going above and beyond for our members since 1986. We should feel immense pride for improving the lives of every patient we have touched for the last 35 years.”