

Improving community health is a passion among Kaiser Permanente physicians

Ever wonder what members of Kaiser Permanente care teams do in their free time? A doctor might spend vacations in Kenya providing health care to women in remote areas. A medical assistant might prepare meals for the homeless on weekends. And a nurse could be on a volunteer mission right now, helping to rebuild homes following a flood or an earthquake.

Many of our physicians and staff are passionate about community service, and two of them recently received recognition for their exceptional efforts. Jennifer Hoock, MD, family physician at Capitol Hill Campus, and David Slack, MD, hospice and palliative care physician at Olympia Medical Center, received the [2018 David Lawrence Community Service Award](#). This annual award recognizes the outstanding volunteer activities of 2 honorees in each Kaiser Permanente region. Each recipient receives a \$10,000 donation to the nonprofit organization of their choice.

Improving health at home and abroad

“Working with people to improve their lives is my passion and part of my responsibility is to help make the world a better place,” says Dr. Hoock. While adopting her daughter in Guatemala in 1999, she witnessed the poverty and poor health resulting from a 30-year civil war. The experience inspired her to co-found Guatemala Village Health in 2010 to improve health in Guatemalan rural villages. The organization provides clinical care, health education, and health worker training, and implements public health projects.

Dr. Hoock also helps support vulnerable populations in the Seattle area. Through her work with Kaiser Permanente Washington’s family medicine residency program, she was influential in several residents joining Guatemala Village Health missions and using their learnings to care for homeless youth at [YouthCare’s Orion Center](#) in Seattle.

Extending hospice care to vulnerable populations

Dr. Slack co-founded the nonprofit Hospice Without Borders in 2010 with co-worker Angela Lee, RN, to serve marginalized, traumatized, and vulnerable populations in Rwanda. “When I walk out to visit a patient and their family in the hills of Rwanda, I regard those folks — often living in the most destitute of conditions — just as much a part of my community as the homeless individuals I’ve met working in Olympia, or the patients and families I care for at Kaiser Permanente,” he says.

Hospice Without Borders provides access to oral opioid analgesics, home hospice and palliative care services, a home-based practitioner program, and bereavement support. The practitioner program has trained more than 100 clinicians who work in 9 districts in Rwanda. The organization has also created workshops in Burundi and plans to expand to other African countries.

Closer to home, Dr. Slack developed a homeless hospice and palliative care shelter outreach clinic in Olympia, where he often cooks dinner and talks to community members so he can better understand their challenges and needs.