

Students get inside look at healthcare career options

Plenty of kids dream about becoming a doctor when they grow up. Thanks to a program created by Kaiser Permanente, some kids get the chance to learn first-hand what that means.

We created the Hippocrates Circle in Southern California 10 years ago, as a way to motivate students interested in careers in healthcare. The program expanded into Kern County earlier this year, starting with 30 seventh- and eighth-grade students from Stonecreek Junior High School in southwest Bakersfield.

In addition to volunteers from Kaiser Permanente, we partnered with the California State University Bakersfield nursing department and San Joaquin Community Hospital to expose students to a spectrum of medical settings and career options.

At our Chester Avenue Medical Offices, for example, students met with specialists and had hands-on experiences such as putting orthopedic casts on their friends. During their visit to San Joaquin Community Hospital, activities included performing simulated surgical procedures on candy bars.

While visiting California State University Bakersfield, the students learned how to conduct a physical assessment and watched nurses perform CPR using the school's high-tech patient simulator dummies.

Perhaps most important of all, the students heard the real stories of healthcare professionals and their experiences with school and their careers.

“The message from our physicians was, ‘Never give up on your dream,’” says Michelle Quiogue, M.D., a family physician based in the East Hills Medical Offices. “I had a sense that our volunteers were just waiting for a project like this to give back to the community, where there's a shortage of doctors.”

Hippocrates Circle is only open to select schools, but you can learn more about the program at kp.org/hippocratescircle.