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CONTACT: ALANA PRISCO  
CELL: 310-740-4617 ON SITE  
E-MAIL: ALANA.K.PRISCO@KP.ORG

## **COMMUNITY ACCESS DAY PROVIDES FREE SURGERIES TO UNDERSERVED WEST LA RESIDENTS**

*Venice Family Clinic and Kaiser Permanente West LA team up to help local patients*

**LOS ANGELES, CA** October 9, 2013 – About 25 West Los Angeles area residents with limited or no health insurance will receive much needed surgeries and medical procedures at no cost to them through Community Access Day, a collaborative effort between Kaiser Permanente West Los Angeles and the Westside-South Bay Coalition. Procedures include hernia repair, gall bladder removal, cataract surgery as well as diagnostic colonoscopies and will be performed October, 19 at 7 a.m. at the Kaiser Permanente West Los Angeles Medical Center.

Since the program's inception five years ago, 78 people have benefited from free surgeries and procedures at the West Los Angeles Medical Center. One of those patients is David Knaus, a photographer from Venice, who received cataract surgery last March. "The cataracts were affecting the quality of my work. Every day was a struggle," says Knaus, who doesn't have health insurance. "I see 100 percent better now – it's a huge improvement from where I was before the surgery."

Underserved populations continue to lack access to specialty care, and the gap between the supply and demand for specialty care is only widening, according to 2011 data from the Specialty Care Initiative, co-led by the Center for Community Health and Evaluation and Kaiser Permanente Community Benefit.

"Committing resources to improving the health of our underserved populations is an integral part of Kaiser Permanente's mission. This day of service to our community shows our continuing dedication to working with our community providers to augment their services and quality of care as we work jointly to break down the barriers to health care access," says Georgina Garcia, RN, Executive Director, Kaiser Permanente West Los Angeles Medical Center.

A faltering economy has pushed more people into the ranks of the uninsured, while health care providers struggle to provide and coordinate specialty care to meet increasingly complex patient needs.

“Improving the health of not only our members, but the entire community is of utmost importance to us at Kaiser Permanente. It helps our community by improving the lives of families and workers, who can’t afford to get sick or unnecessarily hospitalized,” says Jan Takasugi, MD, chief of surgery at Kaiser Permanente West Los Angeles Medical Center. “It is also a wonderful event because we benefit from helping those in need, the very reason for which we went into medicine.”

Patients like Monika Magness, who has suffered from gallstones for more than a decade, will reap the benefit of this upcoming event. “I have missed work for being so ill,” says Magness, a pet caretaker from Palms who has limited health insurance coverage. “The surgery will allow me to live a little more normally without the fear of being sick all the time.”

The Westside-South Bay Coalition comprises Venice Family Clinic, Westside Family Health Center, South Bay Family Health Center, COPE Health Solutions with partners at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, UCLA Health System, Little Company of Mary, and Saint John’s Health Center.

In 2012, Kaiser Permanente West Los Angeles Medical Center invested more than \$27 million to the community through local community benefit programs, including \$624,000 in two-year grants awarded to 55 local non-profit health organizations. By providing comprehensive health care, forming strategic alliances and addressing pressing social issues and the needs of a changing demographic, the West Los Angeles Medical Center is helping to build healthier lives, stronger communities, and better conditions for all of us to live.

### **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, our mission is to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of our members and the communities we serve. We currently serve 9.1 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 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/share](http://kp.org/share).