

# Educating Tomorrow's Healers

**Buoyed by a historic donation, Providence St. Mary expects a new residency program for physicians in 2025.**

Providence St. Mary Medical Center has officially applied for accreditation for an internal medicine residency program, a move that promises new educational opportunities to help alleviate a nationwide doctor shortage and improve access to care.

If all goes as planned, the program's inaugural cohort of physicians will start their Apple Valley residency in July 2025, under the direction of new chief medical officer K. Kevin Park, MD.

The announcement of the program comes amid a stark nationwide doctor shortage, which has long impacted access to care locally. The U.S. Council on Graduate Medical Education recommends 60 to 80 primary care doctors per 100,000 people. In the High Desert, that number is 35 doctors per 100,000, an alarming 40% lower than the recommendation.

"Increasing the number of primary care physicians will ensure patients have better access to care, close to home, in their time of need," Dr. Park says.

John Kozyra, executive director of operations at St. Mary, says discussions for the venture began in 2021. By the end of that year, the hospital had partnered with a consulting firm that specializes in developing residency programs. "We understood that training internal medicine doctors would be the most impactful approach to meet the needs of our community," he explains.

Not only is the program expected to expand the number of physicians in the High Desert, but it also will help strengthen the quality of care via doctors who bring with them the latest advancements in health care.

Dr. Park notes that new medical school graduates typically have the greatest knowledge of evidence-based care and are on the leading edge of medical techniques and advancements in the field. "Having the residents here, you create an environment of academic medicine, so the physician faculty members also will have to be up to date with their knowledge. This will ensure St. Mary is able to provide world-class care," he says.

Research shows that bringing in residents increases retention, meaning many physicians stay and practice where they trained. Dr. Park says, "Educating more trainees here increases the chances of those physicians staying in our community long-term, resulting in elevated care for our patients for many years to come."

Also, the relationships forged between residents and other physicians can quicken the referral process when patients need specialty care. Dr. Park explains, "Not only will they have a deep knowledge of available resources, but they will understand the culture and the needs of the community. They'll know how to relate their patients."

That connection to community is important to the hospital and its leaders, such as Kozyra, who helped secure a \$2.1 million gift



From left: Henry Phan, residency program coordinator, Dr. Ajay Moganti, Dr. Elan Mohanty, Dr. K. Kevin Park

from the Rauch Family Foundation—the largest donation in recent Providence St. Mary Medical Center Foundation history. Based in Upland, the Rauch Foundation focuses in part on improving access to health and medical education in the Inland Empire.

The generous gift will fund the residency program's build-out, including its curriculum, faculty and a simulation lab, among other needs. "It was like the stars completely aligned to make this work," says Kozyra. "We are incredibly grateful for the support. This residency program would not be possible without this gift from the Rauch Family Foundation."

As St. Mary awaits its first class of residents, Dr. Park says he's looking forward to improving the health and well-being of the High Desert community. "I'm most excited about having a chance to make history here. Building and running a residency program in a community in such need of physicians is an honor and a privilege."●

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