

FROM THE HEALTH EXPERTS AT NATIVIDAD MEDICAL CENTER

# INSPIRING HEALTHY LIVES

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FALL/WINTER 2024



## Natividad Volunteer Credits Life-Saving Surgery for Improved Heart Health

Retired college recruiter Pauline Andersen volunteers at Natividad now that her heart works better. Pauline knew she had AFib – also known as atrial fibrillation, a condition that causes an abnormal and often very fast heartbeat – when she started seeing Natividad's Chief of Cardiology, Dr. M. Kerala Serio. She'd been taking blood pressure medications for years and had a family history of high blood pressure.

After a month of monitoring, it became clear to Dr. Serio that Pauline's heart rate would slow in the evenings to the point she could faint. Last March, Pauline received a pacemaker, which she credits with saving her life.

Pauline admits she felt a lot of nervousness going into the surgery. "Dr. Serio was very concerned about me and my heart," Pauline said.

"Mr. and Mrs. Andersen are extremely nice people," Dr. Serio said. "Pauline received the standard care she needed for her medical condition. She is

extremely gracious and I believe gives us more credit than we deserve. I am very pleased that she has done well. I am also thrilled that she is now volunteering at Natividad. Always smiling with positive energy, she is an excellent model for other volunteers."

Pauline recalls how clean the operating room was and that it smelled good. "When I came out of the surgery, the nurse asked if I was hungry and got me pancakes and eggs," she said. "It was like having a concierge."

"I felt really well taken care of at Natividad. My community group prayed for me, and I felt at peace that God was there," Pauline said. "God provided everything I needed to keep me comfortable, including having my husband by my side."

Today, Pauline is eating better and walking more, and her high blood pressure has improved. She volunteers at Natividad on Fridays and plans to help other patients facing surgery like hers.



“

I'm a volunteer at Natividad because Dr. Serio and his staff of wonderful nurses have improved my heart health!"

— Pauline Andersen



To learn more about volunteering at Natividad, visit us at [natividad.com/volunteer](https://natividad.com/volunteer)

  
**Natividad**<sup>®</sup>  
Inspiring healthy lives

# YOU ARE OUR SPECIALTY

## Expert Medical Specialists, Excellent Care

Natividad provides a wide range of specialized medical care, all in a convenient location at our Salinas campus. Our medical specialists are doctors with education, training and experience focused on a specific area of medicine. Depending on your insurance, you may be able to self-refer or a medical provider may need to refer you to one of our medical specialists for specific care or surgery.

### D'Arrigo Family Specialty Services

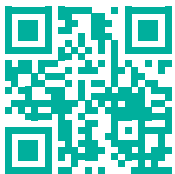
- Adult Congenital Cardiology
- Colorectal Surgery
- Gastroenterology
- General Surgery
- Hand Surgery
- Hematology/Oncology
- Interventional Radiology
- Nephrology
- Neurology
- Neurosurgery
- Orthopedic Surgery (Adult and Pediatric)
- Pediatric Cardiology
- Podiatry (Adult and Pediatric)
- Pulmonary Medicine
- Rheumatology
- Vascular Surgery

### Natividad Medical Group

- Family Medicine (no referral required)
- Family Medicine with Obstetrics (no referral required)
- Gynecology/Oncology
- Obstetrics and Gynecology (OB/GYN)
- Urogynecology

### Cardiology Services

- Comprehensive Cardiovascular Assessment and Treatment
- Diagnostic Testing
- Home Monitoring
- Cardiovascular Procedures



Natividad's specialty clinics  
are accepting new patients.

Call (831) 755-4111 for more  
information or visit us at [natividad.com](http://natividad.com)



Dr. Kartheek Reddy with  
joint-replacement patient  
Edwina Sanson

# What to Know About MEN'S HEART DISEASE



Dr. Jeanne Phillips with patient Jose Velazquez



“Half of the men who die suddenly from coronary heart disease had no previous symptoms. This means you could be at risk even if you feel perfectly healthy.”

— Dr. Jeanne Phillips,  
Cardiologist

## DID YOU KNOW?

Heart disease remains the leading cause of death among men in the United States, claiming the lives of 384,886 men in 2021 alone. That translates to about one in every four male deaths.

Understanding that heart disease can strike silently and unexpectedly is crucial. Fortunately, there are proactive steps you can take to protect your heart:

- **Get regular checkups:** Even if you don't have symptoms, regular checkups can help catch and manage risk factors early.
- **Eat a healthy diet:** Choose a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains.
- **Exercise regularly:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity each week.
- **Manage stress:** Find healthy ways to cope with stress through activities like yoga, meditation or hobbies.
- **Avoid smoking:** Smoking is a significant risk factor for heart disease. If you smoke, get help to quit.



Take the first step toward quitting.

Visit [kickitca.org](https://kickitca.org)

Natividad's expert cardiology team is here to help. You can ask your doctor for a referral or contact us at (831) 796-1630 for more information.

## Tips for Coping with Stress



Managing stress is essential to staying healthy. Doing things like exercising, practicing mindfulness and getting enough sleep can help reduce stress. It's also important for men to know the signs of stress and ask for help if they need it. Your provider can help prevent health problems related to ongoing stress. The sooner you get help, the better.





Health Education Assistants Melissa Raya Contreras and Alma Mandujano-Orta at Pride 2024 at Monterey's Custom House Plaza



County of Monterey Supervisor Luis Alejo with Natividad's Melissa Raya Contreras and Alma Mandujano-Orta at Salinas Juneteenth at Hartnell College

## Out in the Community: Meeting You Where You Are

Have you bumped into Natividad's hardworking outreach team? It wouldn't be surprising if you had: They make a point of showing up for as many Monterey County events as possible. From community events to school resource fairs to health fairs and more, our outreach team is building relationships that inspire healthy lives.

Health Education Assistants Melissa Raya Contreras and Alma Mandujano-Orta are the backbone of our outreach team. They attend many of Natividad's community events. They've been doing outreach for a combined 15 years; each has been at Natividad for three years.

"It's important for us to connect with the community," Melissa said. "We meet a lot of people who were patients at Natividad or had family here. These personal connections make our work even more meaningful."

While attending events, our outreach team members are often called on to answer questions about Natividad's wide variety of services. They also help community members find insurance and access health care.

"Melissa and Alma are a leading edge of the Natividad team and serve as excellent resources for our patients and residents of Monterey County," said Natividad CEO Dr. Chad Harris. "We're proud that Natividad's staff are mission-driven and serve our community. After all, the community is us and our friends, family and neighbors."

In addition to their community outreach roles, Melissa and Alma spend half their time in the office assisting people with signing up for medical insurance assistance such as Medi-Cal, Covered California and the Medi-Cal Access Program, which is also known as MCAP, the Medi-Cal coverage for pregnant people whose income is too high for Medi-Cal. "Navigating insurance coverage like Covered California can be very complicated for some families," Melissa said.

"We guide patients through the application process, provide support and ensure they understand their coverage," Alma said. "It feels good to know that we're making a meaningful difference in their lives and protecting them from financial hardship."

**Last year, Natividad participated in more than 60 events, reaching over 10,000 people in Monterey County. The following is just a sampling of events where you'll find our outreach team:**

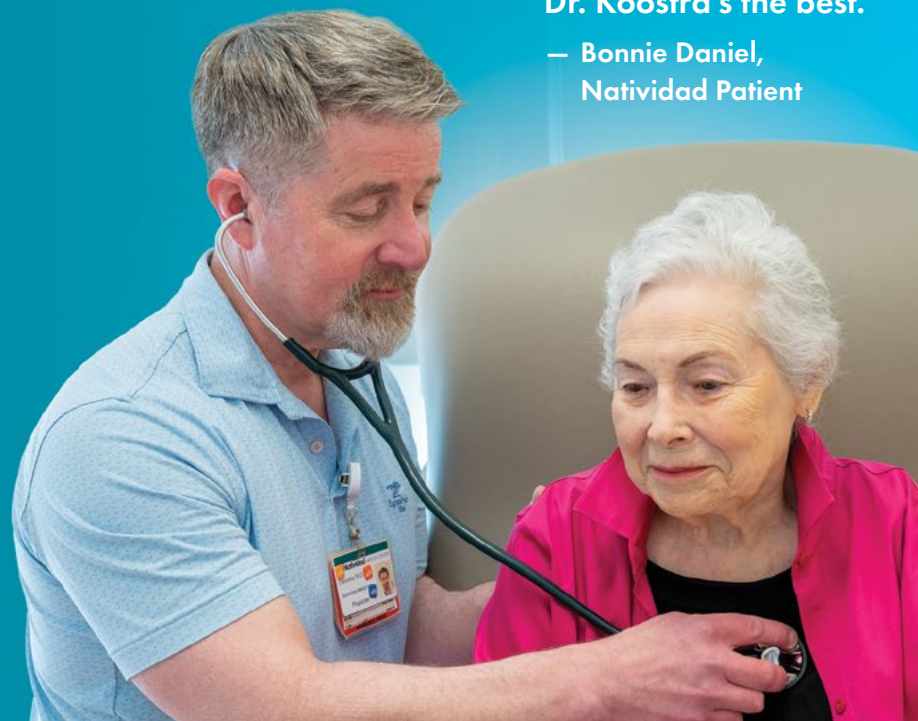
- Ciclovía – Salinas and South County
- Diabetes Awareness Day
- Pride events
- Juneteenth
- Farmers' markets
- Community, school and employer events
- Monterey County Fair
- Trauma community outreach programs
- Blue Zones Project events
- Ag business health fairs
- Monthly CISNE (Monterey County Immigration Services Network) forums hosted by volunteer community members from Natividad, Red Cross, Hartnell College, UFW Foundation and Monterey County Office of Education – Migrant Education

## GET TO KNOW

# John Matthew Koostra, MD

Dr. Koostra specializes in pulmonary medicine, critical care and internal medicine. He earned his medical degree from the prestigious UC Davis School of Medicine. As part of Natividad's pulmonary medicine program, Dr. Koostra cares for patients with breathing problems, including asthma, bronchitis, COPD, cystic fibrosis, sleep apnea and emphysema.

Dr. John Matthew Koostra and Dr. Marta Zulik are available to see new patients at D'Arrigo Family Specialty Services with a referral. More information at [natividad.com/darrigo](https://natividad.com/darrigo)



“ Well, I love him. He's wonderful. Dr. Koostra's the best.”  
— Bonnie Daniel, Natividad Patient

### What's a fun fact about you?

John Matthew Koostra, MD: I do Wordle every day but Duolingo half the time.

### What drew you to medicine or your specialty?

JMK: My dad worked in ag here in Salinas and died of lung cancer at a young age. This motivated me to specialize in pulmonary medicine and help others who are suffering from lung-related diseases.

### What about your work makes you proud?

JMK: I make it a priority to have great relationships with my patients.

### Any special projects you're working on now or in the past?

JMK: I'm restoring my old home — it never ends!

### What should patients know about your specialty or expect about treatment?

JMK: I strongly believe in prevention and wellness, which includes diet, exercise, sleep and mindfulness.

### What's your patient philosophy?

JMK: Patients first. For me, listening and making a bond with patients is key to providing excellent care.

### We hear you're local.

#### Where did you go to school?

JMK: Yes, I grew up in Salinas and went to Salinas schools, including Mission Park Elementary School, Washington Middle School, Salinas High and El Centro High. I graduated from UCLA and then got my medical degree at UC Davis.

### How long have you practiced medicine?

JMK: 25 years.

### What do you enjoy doing when you're not caring for patients at Natividad?

JMK: Hiking, lifting weights, spending time with family and friends watching a game and movies. I also enjoy gardening and orchids and reading about history.





# WALKING IS A WINNER FOR HEALTH

## Even If You Don't Do 10,000 Steps

### Dr. Ana Abril Arias leads a walk at Salinas Soccer Complex with the Blue Zones Project

Good news! You don't have to hit 10,000 steps per day to improve your health. Recent research suggests that this number may not be a one-size-fits-all target.

A study published in the European Journal of Preventive Cardiology involving about 230,000 people from around the world found that walking 4,000 steps per day is associated with a lower risk of dying from any cause. The study revealed that health benefits increase with more steps walked. People who walked 6,000 steps or more per day were the least likely to die.

“The study suggests that while walking more is better, you can also see significant health improvements with fewer steps,” said Dr. Ana Abril Arias, who practices family medicine at Natividad Medical Group. “This is encouraging for those who may find the 10,000-step target unrealistic due to health limitations, busy schedules or other barriers.”

“Unlike so many other types of exercise, walking requires no special training or equipment. It's free, and you can do it almost anywhere,” said Dr. Arias. “You can also easily add walking into your daily routines. I recommend walking to nearly all of my patients.”

Walking is a great form of moderate-intensity aerobic activity if you keep a brisk pace. It's also easy to tailor to your fitness level, and you can walk longer and faster as your fitness improves.

“You can walk alone and use the time for reflection and relaxation,” Dr. Arias said. “Or you can take a tip from the Blue Zones Project and the world's oldest living people and make walking a social event.”

**Dr. Arias said that walking is not just a simple exercise; it's a clear winner for health. Walking can:**

- Help manage weight
- Strengthen the heart and improve cardiovascular health
- Lower blood pressure
- Improve cholesterol levels
- Enhance mental well-being
- Reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, stroke and certain cancers
- Support joint health
- Boost immune function
- Improve sleep quality



“The more steps per day or minutes of exercise a week you can get, the more likely you'll live a longer, healthier life.”

— Dr. Ana Abril Arias

# NATIVIDAD MEDICAL GROUP PRUNEDALE

# Accepting New Patients

## Why You Need a Primary Care Provider

Primary care providers can take care of most of your health care needs. Once you're our patient, your family doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant will make sure you get the right care at the right time and manage long-term (chronic) or short-term (acute) health needs. They'll help you stay healthy by giving you regular checkups and screenings to help prevent or treat diseases. They can also address non-emergency issues like high blood pressure, diabetes, reproductive health, nutrition, sleep problems, stress, and minor illnesses and injuries. Importantly, the providers at Natividad will get to know you and understand your health needs. They'll develop personalized treatment so you know what to do to stay healthy or improve your health.

## Primary Care vs. Urgent & Emergency Care

Your primary care provider should be the first person you visit for your long-term and preventive health needs. They can see you when you get sick and help you get appointments with specialists if needed. Urgent care is for non-life-threatening problems that must be typically taken care of within 24 hours. If you have a life-threatening problem or severe injury or illness, you should go to the emergency room or call 911.

## What Patients Are Saying About Natividad Medical Group Prunedale

"Everyone at Natividad Medical Group Prunedale is amicable, professional, competent, welcoming and efficient. I feel grateful to be treated with humanness. **It's good to feel well taken care of.**"

**"Today's visit was great!**  
The doctor was wonderful.  
The front office staff was good as well."



## How to Establish Care

We're excited that we now have several expert providers on staff so that we can get you in quickly!

- Before making an appointment, check if Natividad Medical Group Prunedale is covered by, or "in-network" with, your insurance. If you need help with this, call (831) 663-3926.
- You should also find out what your insurance covers and how much you'll pay for a visit. Most insurances require a small co-pay at the time of the visit.
- Call (831) 663-3926 to schedule an appointment as a new patient.
- Once you start seeing our provider, you'll come back once a year for a checkup.
- If you have ongoing health issues or need help with your lifestyle, your provider will schedule regular follow-up visits. You can also make extra appointments if you have urgent health problems.
- You'll also have access to Natividad and its full array of services and specialists (see page 2 of this newsletter for a comprehensive list).

17615 Moro Rd., Prunedale, CA 93907  
(831) 663-3926 [natividad.com/prunedale](http://natividad.com/prunedale)







# Baby-Friendly USA STAMP OF APPROVAL



Natividad follows the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, which is a set of evidence-based practices recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) for optimal infant feeding support in the precious first days of a newborn’s life.

A Baby-Friendly USA hospital since 2013, Natividad is proud to provide excellence in care for breastfeeding mothers and babies.

“Natividad has long been recognized as a local leader in the care of women and newborns,” said Karen Fiala, CNM, MSN, RN, Director of Women & Children’s Services. “Serving at a Baby-Friendly hospital, our knowledgeable team helps new parents learn about their baby and breastfeeding. We address any feeding problems immediately — which helps improve breastfeeding success.”

Natividad’s Women & Children’s Services delivered more than 2,300 babies last year and is affiliated with UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospitals. Natividad’s Lactation Clinic provides breastfeeding support, including pumping and storing milk, to expecting and new mothers.

Breastfeeding is associated with several health benefits for both mom and baby.

- Breastfed infants have lower risks of asthma, ear infections, diabetes and childhood obesity.
- Breastfeeding helps a mother’s health and healing following childbirth.
- Mothers who breastfeed benefit from lower rates of breast and ovarian cancers and Type 2 diabetes.



For more information, visit [natividad.com/women-and-childrens-services](http://natividad.com/women-and-childrens-services)



## The Art of Better Health

YOSAL Mural Project Artist Amy Burkman and assistant Bonnie Broderick work on a mural at Natividad featuring YOSAL musician Litzy Martinez, a young violinist and guitar player born at Natividad.

“Litzy is immersed in playing her instrument against a soft, sunrise-inspired background,” Burkman said. “The goal is to evoke a sense of serenity and joy through music, allowing viewers almost to hear the beautiful melodies.”



Scan the QR code to watch Amy Burkman’s documentary project.