

# Times-Herald

## Building to heal

By RACHEL RASKIN-ZRIHEN/Times-Herald staff writer

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Bernard Tyson said he's a living testament to Kaiser Permanente's drive to help members "thrive."



Vallejo native Bernard Tyson, left, listens during a tour of the new Kaiser Permanente Medical Center Vallejo as project director Robin Burr explains details of the structure. Tyson is the nationwide executive vice president of health plan and hospital operations for Kaiser Permanente. (Mike Jory/Times-Herald)

But the Vallejo native didn't plan on having his life saved by the firm he works for. It just happened that way, he said.

Tyson, 49, is executive vice president of health plan and hospital operations for the entire Kaiser Permanente organization nationwide. He was in Vallejo on Monday, touring the new facility under construction.

"One of my first assignments with Kaiser was

overseeing the new heart unit in San Francisco. That was 24 years ago," Tyson said. "Then in 2006, I had an unexpected heart problem in Las Vegas, and I requested to have the surgery in my unit. I'm doing great now."

A 1977 Vallejo High School graduate, Tyson earned a degree in hospital administration from Golden Gate University before landing the job with Kaiser, he said. The Pleasanton resident said he is a recently divorced father of three sons.

Tyson, who spends a significant percentage of his work day checking on the progress of new facilities all over the country, said he has a special place in his heart for the Vallejo hospital. In fact, during Monday's tour, he and one of the construction workers recognized each other as former childhood acquaintances. Both their fathers were church pastors in town.

That kind of thing doesn't happen in the other Kaiser hospitals in the eight regions Tyson oversees, he said.

When it's done, the new Kaiser Permanente Medical Center Vallejo hospital will be about twice the size of the one it's replacing, said senior project manager Kit Neal. It will feature an atrium, water wall, gardens, bamboo, warm, pleasing colors and lots of light and open space, all elements that research proves promote healing and health, Neal said.

"There's not a plain, white wall in the building," said project director Robin Burr.

Nothing about this is arbitrary, Tyson said.

"We've done lot of research and found that a less antiseptic, more comforting approach promotes healing," Tyson said. "It's part of a new

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philosophy ... a healthy environment, more single rooms for patient and family comfort and privacy, and a great environment for the doctors, nurses and staff to work in."

The new facility will include an expanded rehabilitation unit, with two new gymnasiums an indoor therapy pool, 36 new in-patient beds and expanded outpatient services, Burr said.

"It's wonderful to see this commitment to the great city of Vallejo," he said "Vallejo will always be special to me. I'll always be partial to Vallejo."

Kaiser's new hospital is expected to be completed by September 2009, said Dr. Steve Stricker, physician in charge at Kaiser Vallejo since 1994.

Kaiser has nearly 9 million members nationally, 160,000 employees and 17,000 full-time doctors, Tyson said.

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