

Jeffrey Ritterman
Kaiser Permanente Everyday Heroes Story
By Elizabeth Aaron

The work of Jeffrey Ritterman, MD, a cardiologist at Kaiser Permanente's Richmond Medical Center, extends beyond the physical heart to the feeling heart. "I believe that health is not just the absence of disease but a state of physical, mental, and spiritual well-being," Dr. Ritterman says.

This belief permeates Dr. Ritterman's life, and through his creative efforts, he's passed it along to his patients, co-workers, and community. He started a Healthy Living Committee, and he developed Get Moving and Step Out with Me, programs promoting the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity. "A few doctors have even started writing prescriptions for exercise as treatment," he says. "I encourage them to think about our jobs beyond surgery and medication."

Dr. Ritterman has taken a heroic lead in helping Kaiser Permanente create a caring community. He's initiated music therapy and community garden programs to treat patients. Noticing the blank stairwell walls at the Richmond facility, he secured funding for 10 local artists to paint murals on them to encourage people to take the stairs.

An advocate for social and environmental justice, he's traveled to Central America and Southern Africa to support healthcare relief efforts for the poor. "My current focus is on finding ways to help my local community become healthier," says Dr. Ritterman, who has served on his county's Public and Environmental Health Advisory Board for eight years. "The more caring we are, the healthier we will be as individuals and as a community."