

## Satellite Healthcare's grassroots philanthropy serves up cooking classes



Irene Duckins, Jennifer Bates and Brianne Martinez participate in cooking class created by Satellite Dialysis Capitola to celebrate the nonprofit's 40th anniversary. (Contributed)

“Food is such an important part of our everyday lives,” said Emily Watson, a social worker at Satellite Healthcare’s Capitola dialysis center, observing the convenience of “fast cheap food that is usually not nutritious.”

Yet patients face time constraints, spending three to five hours three times a week in dialysis, tired when they return home, creating a disincentive to prepare “heart-healthy” food that could be nourishing and keep them well.

Samantha Wildman, a dietitian at Satellite Dialysis in Capitola, recommended Carter — a guest chef at Let’s Cook in Soquel, where a single class can cost \$85.

La Selva Beach Parks and Recreation District donated the use of its clubhouse kitchen, allowing for 10 to 12 people per class.

Classes were open to dialysis patients, some referred by doctors for being “pre-dialysis,” family members and community members. There were waitlists to get in, and some were turned away for lack of space.

Topics included “Chicken 101,” how to save money by chopping up a chicken at home, Thai curry, local seafood, Caribbean cooking and healthy legumes.

The knife skills class, in particular, got positive feedback.

“Over and over again, I heard ‘that was invaluable. It saves time, saves fingertips, and it helps you feel more efficient and proficient in the kitchen,’” said Watson.

Any chance these cooking classes will be repeated?

It would help Ron Berry, who signed up for a second class but found he was too tired after dialysis to participate.

Watson isn’t sure, but she said, “Being able to offer this again would be wonderful.”

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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CAPITOLA >> Ron Berry admits he is no cook. But he took advantage of a free class in knife skills taught by Cabrillo College culinary instructor Eric Carter, just to get the experience.

“It’s a real skill,” said Berry, who saw how vegetables can be cut one way for stew and another way for soup or salad.

Berry said he appreciated the focus on how to eat healthily and pronounced the corn soup Carter prepared as “wonderful.”

The class was one of six in a series resulting from the “40 Points of Light” philanthropic initiative by Satellite Healthcare, a nonprofit providing dialysis services to people with chronic kidney disease, to celebrate its 40th anniversary.

Satellite asked staff at its 70 centers across the U.S. to find creative ways to address pressing needs in their communities with a grant of \$400 and then with a larger grant of \$4,000.

By the end of the year, Satellite Healthcare will have invested more than \$70,000 in local projects identified as high priority by local employees, according to Satellite spokesman Nicholas Gaffney, describing the grassroots philanthropic experiment as “a tremendous success.”

In Santa Cruz County, Satellite’s Wellbound Santa Cruz location donated \$400 to the Walnut Avenue Women’s Center, which has a 24-hour domestic violence hot line and offers youth mentoring.

Satellite Dialysis Watsonville donated \$400 to Second Harvest Food Bank, which feeds children who would otherwise go hungry, and \$4,000 to Grey Bears for a health fair booth providing fresh food to senior citizens on a limited income.

Satellite Dialysis Capitola donated \$400 to Amazing Surf Adventures, which takes wounded veterans to the ocean for a weeklong surfing experience and spent \$4,000 for cooking classes, creating something entirely new.



**Eric Carter, chief of the Cabrillo College culinary arts program, in white jacket, was recruited by Satellite Dialysis Capitola to teach a series of classes on healthy cooking. (Contributed)**