

Damon Kelsay, MD

By: JULIA COUNTRYMAN



Dr. Kelsay at the summit of the Highland Bowl in Aspen

It's easy to picture Damon Kelsay, MD, surfing the swells off the coast of San Diego, ballooning over the Masai Mara in Kenya, or skiing in Aspen. A California native, his face lights up when he shares stories and photos of these fond memories. Friendly yet introspective, his easy-going manner, compassionate eyes, engaging smile, and warm handshake immediately set visitors at ease.

Kelsay, a Board Certified Cardiologist at Eisenhower Medical Center, knew that he wanted to go into medicine from the time he was five years old, and considered becoming a veterinarian, but changed his mind as a teenager. *"In my first week as a volunteer at a veterinarian's office, I had to help euthanize a dog. I felt so horrible afterward that I knew right then that I couldn't go into a profession where I was going to feel that way every day, so I chose medical school over veterinary school."* He has never regretted that decision.

By performing echocardiography and providing patients with pacemakers, his patients are able to lead longer, healthier lives. Reflecting on his career, he says, *"The most inspirational aspect of cardiology for me is the connection that I make with the patient and their family, particularly when I've helped them through a difficult period in their lives."*

After graduating from Loma Linda University with a major in Biochemistry, Dr. Kelsay continued on to medical school at Loma Linda University. He chose to specialize in cardiology, in part, because of his fascination with the heart and with the technology used to evaluate cardiac health.



Dr. Kelsay and his uncle Sam in Aspen

"When I began looking for a practice to join, I wanted to stay in Southern California to be close to my friends and family." Andrew Rubin, MD and Leon Feldman, MD, Board Certified Cardiologists/Electrophysiologists at Eisenhower Medical Center were key in his decision to join the group. *"I knew Dr. Rubin from Loma Linda and met Dr. Feldman here in the desert before joining Eisenhower. It's rare to find such a great group of doctors who enjoy working together like these guys do."* *"...it's important to slow down and appreciate everything in life."*

Kelsay recalls a case early in his career in which he had to evaluate a potential cardiac transplant donor. *"He was in his early twenties, and a newlywed. He'd fallen through the roof and had suffered a fatal injury,"* Kelsay speaks slowly. *"His family had the clarity and benevolence to turn what was an utter tragedy into someone else's miracle by agreeing to participate in the organ donor program. It was very sobering, and it's something that never leaves you."*

That experience, and others, have led Dr. Kelsay to deeply appreciate the fragility of life and relationships. Kelsay cherishes the time that he spends with Asha, his wife of 12 years, and Sam, his uncle, both of whom have been a tremendous support throughout his schooling and career. *"There are no guarantees in life, and the unexpected does happen,"* Dr. Kelsay emphasizes. *"That's why it's important to slow down and appreciate everything in life."* And Dr. Kelsay does.