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HIGHLIGHTS:

Presenting the keynote address at this year's Brainworks, Dr. Gabriel E. Hunt, Jr., will describe the challenges and opportunities he encountered on his path to becoming a neurosurgeon. The seventh- and eight-grade attendees will participate in many activities designed to show that science can be fun and scientific endeavors can be highly rewarding. New this year is a brain injury prevention booth, complete with X-rays. Brainworks will be held Monday, Jan. 24, beginning at 10 a.m.

STUDENTS AT BRAINWORKS TO HEAR YOUNG NEUROSURGEON ROLE MODEL AND SEE BRAIN INJURY BOOTH

LOS ANGELES (Jan. 13, 2005) – Seventh- and eighth-grade students attending the seventh annual Brainworks event might not consider Dr. Gabriel E. Hunt Jr., particularly young, but many who hear his keynote presentation will be able to relate to his experiences growing up, and a few might even aspire to follow in his footsteps.

Reared by his mother after the death of his father, Hunt, now in his early 30s, went on to earn his bachelor's degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, where he also received his medical degree. He completed an internship in general surgery and a residency in neurological surgery at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital and the Jefferson Hospital for Neuroscience in Philadelphia.

Awarded a Howard Hughes Research Fellowship while attending UCLA, Hunt, who is black, will describe in his address the challenges he faced and the opportunities he found as he pursued his goals. His siblings, too, were motivated and successful: His sister is a family practice physician in Atlanta and his brother is an orthopedic spine surgeon at Cedars-Sinai.

Since his years in medical school, Hunt's professional development has been steered in part by the mentoring of Dr. Keith L. Black, director of Cedars-Sinai's Maxine Dunitz Neurosurgical Institute, which hosts Brainworks each year. Hunt joined the Institute staff last summer as a neurosurgeon. He treats brain tumors and vascular abnormalities and conducts research to develop new treatments for malignant brain tumors.

Added to this year's program is a brain injury prevention booth. In addition to reiterating every mother's advice on wearing helmets and never running with sharp objects, it will provide X-ray documentation of actual cases facing neurosurgeons when accidents happened.

Students will see the tools and equipment used in brain surgery and will have an opportunity to perform virtual surgery using 3-D imaging technology and a phantom skull. They will have their vital signs taken and find out how these measurements are used in treating patients. They also will examine a sheep brain and look at brain tumor cells through a microscope.

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Throughout the day, students will meet researchers, neurosurgeons, patient care providers and other professionals. They will be greeted by pet therapy dogs that assist in patient rehabilitation, and they will participate in games and activities that stimulate minds and prove that science can be fun. They also will have a souvenir photo taken with Black, the internationally recognized neurosurgeon and brain tumor researcher who founded the Institute in 1997.

Black, who holds the Ruth and Lawrence Harvey Chair in Neuroscience at Cedars-Sinai and directs the Division of Neurosurgery and the Comprehensive Brain Tumor Program, has had a scientific curiosity throughout his life. In his teen years he befriended research scientists and watched them work. At 17, he earned the Westinghouse Science Award for a research paper he authored.

He established Brainworks to stir similar interests in today's students and steer them toward scientific endeavors that will excite them and benefit humanity. He and Brainworks organizers hope the students, many of whom come from disadvantaged communities, will realize that careers in science and medicine can be within their reach.

Teachers at schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District and at several independent schools select the students who are invited to attend, and the Institute assumes all costs and provides a complimentary lunch.

This year's program takes place Monday, Jan. 24, from 10 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.

One of only four hospitals in California whose nurses have been honored with the prestigious Magnet designation, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center is one of the largest nonprofit academic medical centers in the Western United States. For 17 consecutive years, it has been named Los Angeles' most preferred hospital for all health needs in an independent survey of area residents. Cedars-Sinai is internationally renowned for its diagnostic and treatment capabilities and its broad spectrum of programs and services, as well as breakthroughs in biomedical research and superlative medical education. It ranks among the top 10 non-university hospitals in the nation for its research activities and was recently fully accredited by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc. (AAHRPP). Additional information is available at www.cedars-sinai.edu.

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