Turning Dedication Into Action

Commitment and action go hand in hand when it comes to Cedars-Sinai’s approach to improving the community’s health, a goal that has been part of the organization’s mission since the medical center’s founding more than a century ago.

Cedars-Sinai’s local service priorities are based on a Community Health Needs Assessment conducted every three years. This comprehensive review of health needs in underserved areas of the Los Angeles region includes input from community partners and public health leaders who have first-hand knowledge of the challenges faced by low-income and minority populations.

This year’s needs assessment led Cedars-Sinai to identify the following priorities in its Community Benefit:

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‘We’re Very Lucky to Have LaMont With Us’

When Cedars-Sinai reaches out to underserved communities to help improve their health status, two custom-built RVs that house mobile medical clinics play a key role. And it takes a special someone to navigate these big vehicles through the crowded byways and nerve-wracking traffic of sprawling Los Angeles—then to assist calmly with patients in need.

From the outset, those who work in the COACH for Kids and Their Families® program of Cedars-Sinai’s Maxine Dunitz Children’s Health Center recognized that driver LaMont Harrington had all the right qualities.

“We did a lot of interviewing for the position, but LaMont stood out,” said Anne Traynor, RN, MN, a nurse practitioner and clinical supervisor for the COACH program. “Every step of the way, everyone really liked him.”

Though his background was as a trucker, Harrington’s potential immediately was visible to Traynor’s boss, COACH Director Michele Rigsby Pauley, RN, MSN.

“He had a positive attitude and was willing to learn the other skills that were required of the job,” Traynor said. “Michele has taught me that

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LaMont Harrington’s positive attitude and willingness to learn make him “a real gem,” says the COACH program’s clinical supervisor.
sometimes it’s attitude over ability that matters, and with LaMont we found a real gem.”

Seeing him quietly in action explains all. On a recent Monday morning, Harrington, 50, went with his COACH colleagues to the 99th Street Elementary School. Across from a DWP pumping station and next to a trash-strewn lot, he wrangled a trio of anxious boys brought to the COACH site by their mothers for physical exams and vaccinations.

Harrington, who took part in certified nursing assistant training so he could work with patients, demonstrated the finer points of a stethoscope to his three reluctant clients. He listened to each boy’s chest. He then let them put the device on and showed them how to hear their friends’ heartbeats. As the boys laughed and joked and listened in wonder, Harrington quickly filled in their charts with their vital signs, information they barely noticed he was collecting. By the time it was their turn to enter the mobile medical clinic exam room to see Traynor, they were relaxed and confident.

“The No. 1 thing the parents say is they lost their health insurance and don’t know how else they would care for their kids,” Harrington said. “It’s good that we come around to this part of town.”

On this day, the COACH crew is serving children and families in South Los Angeles. It’s Harrington’s part of town. He was born and raised here, the second-youngest of seven children and the only boy.

“I’ve got six sisters,” he said and laughed. “Helps you learn to get along with anybody.”

Harrington’s parents still live in his childhood home. As COACH's mobile clinic makes its rounds in neighborhoods around the city, Harrington invariably runs into people he grew up with. And after his seven years on the job, children who were once new and frightened patients greet him like an old friend.

“Just last week there were a couple kids that, the first time, they were scared of me,” he recalled. “Now, they come asking for me.”

Harrington’s day starts early. He usually begins at 6 a.m., ensuring the mobile medical clinic is clean, stocked and ready to roll. He drives four days a week to a different school or site. He finds a safe parking spot, then helps the medical staff with the day's clinic. After the last patient has been seen, Harrington is still at his duties, packing up the COACH and getting it back on the road. Back at Cedars-Sinai, Harrington stops by the lab to drop off the day's medical tests for processing.

“We’re very lucky to have LaMont with us,” said program director Rigsby Pauley. “His personality and attitude are wonderful, and he’s always willing to learn whatever is needed to help the team.”

“He's great with the kids and the families,” Rigsby Pauley said. “He connects with them, from the little kids to the grandparents.”

For Harrington, it’s more than a job — it’s a labor of love.

“I grew up here, and it’s good to come back to a part of town that I know, to be able to give back to the community,” he said.

“We do good work here. For me, this is like coming back home.”
The West Hollywood Senior Health Fair is one of the largest gatherings where nurses offer screenings, guidance and referrals that can prove lifesaving.

West Hollywood Fair Is Vital for the Vulnerable

A Lifesaver for Seniors

After taking three buses, 82-year-old Rose Steckler was a bit frazzled when she arrived at the 12th annual Senior Health Fair at West Hollywood’s Plummer Park community center. The fair is a lifesaver for some of the region’s most vulnerable residents.

Cedars-Sinai, a co-sponsor of the health fair, brought 21 nurses to provide free screenings for heart disease, diabetes and breast cancer. Six of them speak Russian, a benefit to the large contingent of Russian immigrants who face a language barrier as well as financial and other obstacles to getting the care they need.

The medical center has been sending health professionals to this event since it began, as part of a longstanding partnership with the City of West Hollywood. The health fair is also co-sponsored by Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center and The Saban Free Clinic.

Holding a worksheet where her test results and health recommendations would be recorded, Steckler made her way from room to room, taking a number and waiting her turn for one-on-one time with a nurse.

First, she had her blood pressure taken — not bad, but a bit high.

“There’s nothing bad, but a bit high,” Steckler noted. “Maybe it was the bus trip,” she said, adding that she would get another reading after lunch.

Then she moved on to the room where Cedars-Sinai nurses were using palm-sized devices to measure total cholesterol and glucose levels. When her number was called, Steckler took a seat next to Eileen Rodriguez, RN, MSN.

For Rodriguez, the two minutes or so it takes for the test results to pop up on the digital screen are teachable moments.

“Do you walk every day?” she asked.

“I do take a walk every day,” replied Steckler, who is slender and spry.

“That’s great,” Rodriguez said, encouragingly. “It’s important to walk 30 minutes a day. You can maximize your quality of life by staying busy, healthy and happy.”

When the test results appeared, it was all good news for Steckler.

“Your cholesterol is excellent, and your blood sugar is normal,” Rodriguez reported. “Very good results.”

While Steckler was pleased with her results, many others in the group received news that called for action. One Russian immigrant, who spoke little English, learned that her blood pressure is alarmingly high, despite her lean frame and apparent good health.

Larisa Bazarenco, RN-BC, delivered the information in Russian, and led the woman down the hall to another nurse, who specializes in stroke treatment and was handing out educational materials on risk factors and symptoms. Then Bazarenco ushered her to another nurse for counseling on follow-up steps.

Gail Millan, MN, RN-BC, who organizes teams for community events in her role as Nursing Education Program coordinator for the Cedars-Sinai Geri and Richard Brawerman Nursing Institute, observed the event with satisfaction.

Helping people like the Russian woman is what Cedars-Sinai’s long tradition of community service is all about, she said.

“She feels she doesn’t have options because she can’t afford treatment,” Millan noted. By the time she left the health fair, however, the woman had options — referrals to clinics where she can get free or low-cost healthcare.

Cedars-Sinai provides health screenings at community sites in underserved parts of Los Angeles continued on page 6.
Implementation Strategy for 2013–16:

- Focus on geographic areas where the needs are greatest, particularly South Los Angeles and the Metro Los Angeles area (including Downtown, Mid-City and West Hollywood), as well as high-need communities closer to Cedars-Sinai

- Increase access to primary and specialty care as well as mental health and preventive services

- Provide health education and preventive care to protect people from key chronic health conditions and their underlying risk factors, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and obesity

Cedars-Sinai brings hundreds of free programs and services to low-income neighborhoods whose residents otherwise might go without healthcare. These areas include Downtown/Skid Row, Pico-Union/Central Los Angeles, South Los Angeles, Watts, Compton, Inglewood, Crenshaw/Mid-City and Hollywood/West Hollywood.

A crucial part of the strategy is working closely with community-based organizations such as schools, local government, senior centers, health and human service programs and community clinics in ways that enable them to do more for the people they serve.

Our efforts to increase access to care include:

- Sending fully equipped mobile medical units to disadvantaged neighborhoods to provide free healthcare services through the COACH for Kids and Their Families® program

- Partnering with free and community clinics around Los Angeles to train medical residents to provide high-quality treatment for a wide range of medical conditions while expanding the clinics’ capacity to help the city’s most vulnerable residents

The needs assessment identified some of the reasons residents in underserved areas are at greater risk for chronic disease, including lack of access to healthy foods and safe places for physical activity, lack of awareness and education about healthy habits, and difficulty changing behavior in order to lose weight.

Cedars-Sinai’s priorities for fighting chronic disease include:

- Offering Healthy Habits programs that focus on nutrition and physical activity education and lead to healthier lifestyle choices by children and their families. In schools and community centers throughout Mid-City Los Angeles, Cedars-Sinai provides intensive curricula on food and fitness for children and parents as well as teacher trainings, health information displays and Grocery Store Tour programs

- Providing free educational lectures in the community and sending nurses, physicians and other health professionals to health fairs to provide information, risk assessment and health screenings, immunizations and referrals as needed for conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and cancer

- Offering support for cancer patients, including an exercise program for individuals with cancer-related fatigue, a Cancer Survivor Support Group and Cancer Survivorship Services that help improve quality of life during and after treatment

“All these programs and services reflect an extensive planning process to determine where and how we can make a difference,” said Cindy Levey, MPH, associate director of Community Benefit Systems and Planning at Cedars-Sinai. “We assess needs on an ongoing basis and develop strategies with help from our partners to make sure our efforts have the greatest possible impact on our community’s health well into the future.”

By the Numbers

- **112**: Number of Head Start teachers Cedars-Sinai’s Healthy Habits program recently trained to incorporate physical activity and healthful eating practices into their preschool classes. It’s all about getting an early start on good health.

- **375**: Number of homebound seniors and other vulnerable individuals served locally by Meals on Wheels, thanks to Cedars-Sinai’s donation of kitchen space and staff time to prepare food.

- **1,067**: Number of community members who received free flu and pneumococcal immunizations through Cedars-Sinai’s outreach programs.

- **4,844**: Number of early detection hypertension and diabetes screenings performed by Cedars-Sinai nurses at community health events over a recent 10-month period.
More than 9,000 people received health services from Cedars-Sinai physicians, nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, podiatrists, educators, advanced practice nurses, members of the clinical research team, members of the management team and Youth Employment and Development students at the annual Telemundo Health and Wellness Expo, held March 10 at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

The Telemundo expo, which drew more than 33,000 attendees this year, offers healthcare information for the Latino community in Los Angeles. In the Cedars-Sinai area of the event, services included flu shots and childhood immunizations, total cholesterol, diabetes and blood pressure screenings, breast health information, arthritis screenings and counseling for everyone whose test results fell outside the normal range.

Attendees went from station to station, where they had their blood pressure checked, gave blood for glucose and cholesterol screenings, received nutritional counseling, consulted with pharmacists and visited a weight counseling station, where they learned their body mass index, a calculation based on height and weight.

The numbers, which amounted to almost 15 percent more than last year’s 7,884 screenings, reflect the continued need for affordable healthcare within the Latino community, according to Michele Rigsby Pauley, MSN, RN, program director for COACH for Kids and Their Families®, which is part of Cedars-Sinai’s Maxine Dunitz Children’s Health Center.

“For many of the people here, it’s the only time all year they’ll see a doctor,” Rigsby Pauley said. In addition to flu shots and childhood immunizations, the COACH staff offered displays about good nutrition, dental education and exercise.

There also was a guessing game aimed at highlighting just how much sugar is in a can of soda — 10 full teaspoons.

“Parents and kids are all startled when we show them how much sugar they’re getting in a single soda,” Rigsby Pauley said. “And they are receptive when we talk about alternatives.”

New at the health fair this year was a screening for arthritis, where hundreds of people waited patiently in a line that snaked across the room and then doubled up on itself.

“We collect information, examine their hands for signs of arthritis, and then refer them to services where they can get further help or treatment,” said Michael H. Weisman, MD, director of the Division of Rheumatology at Cedars-Sinai. “So far, in the majority of people we’ve screened today, we’ve seen signs of varying degrees of arthritis.”

For Brenda Saenz, 22, the results of her blood glucose and cholesterol screenings were a wake-up call that she needs to better manage her weight.

“An event like this, it’s really important, because a lot of people just don’t have the time or the money to see a doctor, let alone a really good doctor,” she said.

More than 360 Cedars-Sinai employees staffed the health fair, up from 270 last year, said Logan Williams, associate director of the Department of Community Health and Education.
Williams, associate director of the Department of Community Health and Education.

“It’s even busier this year than last year, which shows you the need,” said Williams, who also accepted a Certificate of Recognition for Cedars-Sinai on behalf of the California State Senate from state Sen. Ed Hernandez.

“We’re very proud of our role in helping the community,” Williams said.

Some people traveled from other counties for the event. One family — friends of a friend of a Cedars-Sinai employee — drove in from Riverside. A woman in the family learned at the expo that she has diabetes, and one of the children was found to be overweight, so her parents were cautioned about her diet. The Cedars-Sinai employee said the family thanked her for letting them know about the event.

During the screenings, eight people with dangerously high glucose levels were referred to clinics and two were seen by paramedics. A man who showed signs of having recently suffered a stroke also was referred for immediate medical care at a local emergency room.

Gail Millan, MN, RN-BC, who coordinated the nursing staff at the event, worked with the advanced practice nurses to provide immediate assessment of patients and secure urgent treatments for participants. Many nursing staff members — including staff nurses, advance practice nurses, educators, managers, directors and the chief nursing officer — work together to provide community service at multiple events throughout the year.

“You can’t help but be moved by the number of people here who are seeking what we see as basic medical care,” said Joanne Laguna Ruiz, RN, director of Nursing Resources. “We’re grateful to be here and have an opportunity to give back to our community.”

Breast cancer screening was one service available at the West Hollywood Senior Health Fair.

A Lifesaver for Seniors

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throughout the year, Millan said. With 400 participants, the West Hollywood Senior Health Fair is one of the largest gatherings where nurses offer screenings, guidance and referrals that can prove lifesaving.

Abbe Land, a West Hollywood City Council member, stood in a crowded hallway of the community center, greeting health fair participants with smiles and hugs.

“What’s so powerful about this event is having all these resources in one place to give people a chance to get screenings and hear about resources they may not know about,” she said. “We’re seeing many more frail elderly in our city and many live at the poverty level, so it’s critical that we help people age in place and stay in their apartments and community as long as possible.

“For a long time, we have partnered with Cedars-Sinai to meet so many health needs. We really value Cedars-Sinai’s partnership and willingness to come not only to this event, but wherever we need them to provide health education to our community.”

Breast cancer screening was one service available at the West Hollywood Senior Health Fair.
Step Lively This Summer With Healthy Habits

As the weather heats up and kids relish the freedom of summer, Cedars-Sinai’s Healthy Habits programs keep the focus on active bodies and good nutrition. From workouts for parents at inner city parks to summer day camps in Koreatown classrooms and local recreation centers where kids concoct healthy snacks and do the “milk mambo,” it’s all about helping people lead healthier lifestyles year-round.

Mental Health Grants Go Where They’re Needed

The names on waiting lists for free or low-cost mental health services in Los Angeles include people of all ages facing myriad struggles, and far too many never receive the help they need. The group includes children who have been abused or exposed to violence in their neighborhood, teens struggling with eating disorders, substance abuse and depression, and adults needing treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, manic-depressive illness or schizophrenia.

Cedars-Sinai’s 2013 Community Health Needs Assessment found that, in some underserved areas of Los Angeles, most adults who need help for an emotional or mental health problem do not receive treatment.

To expand resources for those in greatest need, Cedars-Sinai has awarded $1.6 million in grants to 24 Los Angeles nonprofit organizations that provide direct, community-based services.

The two-year grants, awarded in 2012, have enabled these organizations to help a greater number of at-risk individuals and families in underserved areas through free or low-cost mental healthcare, prevention, early intervention and treatment. In the first year, Cedars-Sinai funded quality mental health services for more than 5,400 individuals primarily in Central and South Los Angeles and Mid-City neighborhoods.

Grant recipients include:

- Union Rescue Mission and Homeless Health Care Los Angeles, which address the mental health needs of the homeless
- Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, which focuses on the needs of families with children age 5 and younger who have experienced adverse life events
- Para Los Niños, which promotes academic success and social well-being for children through programs that include mental health services
- Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles, which provides wide-ranging social services and offers counseling for adults who have experienced trauma and are in emotional distress
- Amanecer Community Counseling Services, which offers programs for mothers struggling with postpartum depression as well as victims of domestic violence
- The Maple Counseling Center, which provides low-cost comprehensive mental health services to individuals, couples, families and groups
- Korean American Family Service Center, which offers counseling, education and other social services for low-income individuals and families
- Eisner Pediatric and Family Medical Center, which provides diagnostic and therapeutic services for low-income, uninsured children coping with mental, emotional and behavioral disorders

Also among grant recipients are a number of community clinics, including The Saban Free Clinic, Venice Family Clinic and Clínica Monseñor Oscar A. Romero.
From Yoga to Transplants: Exploring Jewish Wisdom

Jewish leaders and members of the public explored the connections between Jewish wisdom and wellness during a community-wide “week of learning” that delved into subjects as wide ranging as the influence of Jewish tradition on end-of-life decisions, yoga as a healing art and the Jewish perspective on organ transplantation.

More than 3,500 people attended Jewish Wisdom and Wellness Week, a series of lectures, classes, musical performances and art exhibits focusing on a broad stream of Jewish thought and practice. The events, which highlighted important themes around wisdom, prayer, family and community, were held in April at locations around Los Angeles, including Cedars-Sinai, synagogues, communal organizations and college campuses. The week of learning was co-hosted by Cedars-Sinai and the Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and held in collaboration with 60 community partners across the greater Los Angeles area.

Joel L. Kushner, PsyD, interim director of the Kalsman Institute, said the idea was to “tap into the deep well of Jewish wisdom and use it as a lens to show how it can inform and help heal our bodies and spirits.”

Jonathan Schreiber, Cedars-Sinai’s director of Community Engagement, added, “Our goal was to jump-start the conversation that Judaism is a resource for people who are addressing health needs and personal crises. Looking at our personal connections to faith and tradition can give a tremendous lift to many aspects of our health.”