In the Community
About the Cover:

Each pin on this map marks a location where Cedars-Sinai provides programs that give communities access to health information and services. The pins represent a sampling of the many places we reach in a geographic area that includes some of the Los Angeles region’s most vulnerable residents.
A Passion for Helping Others

It’s in our DNA. A commitment to meeting the community’s health needs has been a defining quality of Cedars-Sinai since the beginning—from our start in 1902 as the 12-bed Kaspare Cohn Hospital in Angeleno Heights to our emergence as a world-renowned, 1,000-bed non-profit academic medical center.

This deeply ingrained tradition of community service takes many forms. We offer ongoing health education programs and services such as immunizations and health screenings to those with the greatest need through hundreds of programs at community centers, free clinics, schools, parks and other sites around Los Angeles. We increase access to healthcare for the underserved in our community in other ways as well. For example, Cedars-Sinai provides free and part-pay hospital care to those who qualify for financial assistance, and we help cover the unpaid costs of government programs such as Medicare.

People from all walks of life benefit from our efforts to make our community stronger. While many think of Cedars-Sinai as the hospital of the stars, the rich and famous represent only a very small fraction of the people we serve. We address the wide-ranging health needs of a broad spectrum of residents in one of the most diverse urban areas in the country.

We work closely with community organizations to identify the most significant needs, and we support our partners in ways that enable them to do even more for the people they serve. This ensures that our efforts will have the greatest possible benefit for decades to come.

Cedars-Sinai also impacts the future health of our community by conducting medical research that will ultimately improve quality of life for countless individuals—locally and around the world—and by educating the next generation of healthcare professionals.

All these efforts grow out of a passion for helping others that is shared by everyone at Cedars-Sinai, where the highest quality patient care is delivered with compassion that extends far beyond our borders.
What would it be like if you didn’t have any bones?” Joyce Culwell, a Cedars-Sinai community health educator, asks a group of second-graders.

Many small hands go up.

“You couldn’t bend your arms or knees,” one student answers.

“You wouldn’t have any energy,” another says.

The children are participating in a one-hour workshop called Healthy Habits for Kids. Part of Cedars-Sinai’s broad-based effort to fight obesity, this 10-week program on nutrition and fitness is offered in a number of elementary schools throughout the year, primarily in underserved neighborhoods of Mid-City, Koreatown and Hollywood.

The question about bones relates to the word of the day: calcium. Joyce talks about how calcium builds strong bones and teeth, the healthiest choices in the “dairy” food group and where these products come from—which leads to many questions about cows.

The children are eager to find out what’s in the bag of groceries Joyce has brought to class. They line up as she unpacks the ingredients for a yogurt parfait—low-fat yogurt, whole-grain cereal and canned peaches. They mix the ingredients together back at their kid-size desks, then quietly savor their creations.

This is one of a number of nutritious—and tasty—snacks the students discover over the course of the workshop. Another favorite is “ants on a log,” a celery stick topped with peanut butter and raisins. Joyce gives the children easy-to-prepare recipes like these to encourage healthier snacking at home.

Parents report that the Healthy Habits sessions are making a difference. As one mother wrote in a program evaluation: “Thank you for teaching my daughter to eat healthy. It helped a lot to show the difference between healthy food and junk food. Now she knows what is good for her body.”
Nine women huddle in the bread aisle at Ralphs market at the corner of Crenshaw and Slauson, searching the labels to find a brand with whole wheat and at least three grams of fiber per serving. Next stop: the dairy section. The women take notes as they go from one section to another, skipping the aisles lined with chips, candy and sodas.

A Cedars-Sinai community health educator leads this Grocery Store Tour, a program launched by the Medical Center in 2008 in partnership with the Los Angeles Urban League. Participants learn how to choose healthy foods on a budget. Many become avid food label readers once they see how dramatically ingredients can vary in different brands of the same product. “It feels good to shop more intelligently,” says one woman after the Ralphs tour.

The tours are offered several times a year. This is one of many ways Cedars-Sinai supports the Urban League’s Neighborhoods@Work Initiative, a multifaceted effort to improve quality of life in a 70-square-block area of the Park Mesa Heights community in the Crenshaw district.

Prevention Is Power

Lifestyle changes can do miraculous things for patients who are at risk for or have been diagnosed with diabetes, says Diane McWhorter, a certified diabetes educator and nurse practitioner.

She offers diabetes prevention and management classes as well as one-on-one counseling for patients of Cedars-Sinai Medical Group and Cedars-Sinai Health Associates. “Our doctors are very proactive about educating patients who are at risk for Type 2 diabetes because if you make lifestyle changes soon enough, you may be able to stop it before it starts,” she says.

For the 24 million Americans who have diabetes, she adds, the right diet and regular exercise are crucial to preventing the disease from progressing and causing such complications as kidney disease, nerve damage and blindness.
Hooked on Fitness

They started exercising together during the 10-week Healthy Habits for Families workshop Cedars-Sinai offers at their children’s elementary school—and they got hooked. When the sessions ended, the group of about 20 moms began gathering on their own for regular workouts, often with young children in tow.

Claudia Gutierrez, the Cedars-Sinai community health liaison who led the workshop at Arlington Heights Elementary School, is thrilled to see that fitness has become such a high priority for this group because her goal is to help parents set the right example for their children.

Says Cindy Levey, associate director of Community Health Initiatives at Cedars-Sinai: “Once parents make lifestyle changes that model healthy behavior, they can help their children get started on a lifetime of good eating and exercise habits. At the same time, they reduce their own risk of developing health problems as they get older.”

The women end each workout by forming a circle and touching hands to affirm their commitment to making time in their lives for fitness.

“Cedars-Sinai has been a vital partner with the Los Angeles Urban League’s Neighborhoods@Work Initiative and our efforts to build healthy communities. They have displayed a strong commitment to improve health access for urban communities through a variety of educational activities, programs and events.”

BLAIR H. TAYLOR
President and CEO
Los Angeles Urban League
Walking for Fitness and Friendship

They walk and talk. And friendships form as participants in the Cedars-Sinai Center Strutters program do laps around the Beverly Center.

For two decades, this walk-for-fitness program has motivated people ages 60 to 90 to exercise regularly.

Taye Torio has been participating for 19 years. At 88, she’s still going strong, and she believes Center Strutters has a lot to do with the spring in her step.

She not only drives herself to the Beverly Center several times a week to walk around the indoor mall, but also works in her garden, does her own cooking and housework, and takes an art class. She wakes up feeling good nearly every day, and her blood pressure is normal.

“I’m pretty healthy and energetic. I can do just about everything, and I’m very thankful for that,” she says.

Center Strutters involves about 300 participants over the course of a year, with a core group of about 50 people who walk together between 8:30 and 10 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The group puts in a total of about 25,000 miles a year. Logan Williams, associate director of Community Health and Education at Cedars-Sinai, logs their miles each session and encourages them to keep walking.

No one counts the many cups of coffee participants have enjoyed together, but the social time is a big part of what brings people back, week after week and year after year.

“I’ve made very good friends in this group,” Taye says. “We look forward to getting together for coffee after we walk.”
Hundreds of people attend West Hollywood’s annual Senior Health Fair in May at Plummer Park, where a team from Cedars-Sinai provides free health screenings, immunizations and information.

The screenings, performed by Cedars-Sinai nurses, can lead to early diagnosis and referrals. For example, half of the 30 women who received breast exams at a recent fair were given referrals for further evaluation.

The Medical Center also offers clinics where seniors and other high-risk individuals receive free flu/pneumococcal immunizations at various locations around Los Angeles between October and January. Clinic sites include the 88th Street Temple Church, Park La Brea and the People Coordinated Service Multipurpose Senior Center in the Crenshaw district.

These services for seniors are part of a larger effort that includes a wide range of community health programs reaching thousands of people of all ages each year.

“Experts from Cedars-Sinai have long provided health education and screenings to West Hollywood community members with limited resources who might not otherwise have access to healthcare services. We’re fortunate to have such a well-respected medical center that cares about its neighbors right here in our community.”

LESLIE ISENBERG
Social Services Program Administrator
City of West Hollywood
Teaming Up With Telemundo

Nurse practitioner Sylvia Estrada, RN, is one of many Cedars-Sinai employees who speak Spanish, understand the health problems facing the underserved Latino population of Los Angeles, and welcome every opportunity to help.

These employees play a crucial role in activities such as the annual health fair organized by the local Telemundo Spanish-language television station. The event draws as many as 30,000 people to the Los Angeles Convention Center. Cedars-Sinai sends a team that includes a number of nurses, as well as medical staff, diabetes educators, dietitians, interpreters and nursing students, among others. They provide free services such as blood pressure and diabetes education and screening, nutrition counseling and immunizations. They also teach children good dental health habits.

“We see a lot of hypertension and uncontrolled diabetes in the large underserved and uninsured Latino population of Los Angeles,” Sylvia says. “We teach people how to take better care of themselves so they can prevent problems like these from developing or getting worse.”
ears stream down 5-year-old Madison’s face as she looks up at Marta Pavlicek, RN, a Cedars-Sinai nurse who has just given her a shot.

“I don’t want anymore,” Madison says. Her mother has brought her to Cedars-Sinai’s COACH for Kids and Their Families® mobile medical unit for several childhood vaccines.

Two more shots to go. “I’ll be very gentle,” Marta says. Then she asks, “Do you know the alphabet? Can you sing it for me?”

Madison brightens a bit and begins to sing softly. Before she gets through the alphabet, Marta finishes and asks for a hug. A big squeeze and then Madison is on her way, smiling with a new coloring book and pencil in hand.

Next comes a 5-year-old boy who also ends up in tears, but walks away wearing a band-aid on his arm like a badge of honor. Then Marta counsels a woman who has high blood pressure, advising her to take her medication properly, cut down on salt and caffeine, and exercise regularly.

It’s all part of a typical day’s work. “I love what I do,” says Marta, a native of Argentina who speaks Spanish with many of her patients. “I especially love to work with children—they keep me young.”

The COACH program, part of Cedars-Sinai’s Maxine Dunitz Children’s Health Center, has been providing free medical care to children in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods of Los Angeles since 1994. Two fully-equipped mobile medical units regularly visit schools and other community sites to provide preventive care such as immunizations and screenings, as well as diagnosis and treatment of illnesses and referrals to affordable health services.

Marta, who joined Cedars-Sinai in 1971 and COACH more than a decade ago, is saddened by the poverty she sees as the mobile medical unit makes its rounds. “We do what we can, and people are very grateful,” she says.
LaMont Harrington grew up with six sisters in a house in South Los Angeles where his parents still live after 48 years. His deep roots in this community make his job especially satisfying.

As the driver of a COACH for Kids and Their Families® mobile medical unit, he brings a team of Cedars-Sinai medical professionals and social workers into South Los Angeles neighborhoods, among other areas, to provide health information and services to residents.

LaMont, who joined COACH five years ago, is like the runner on a movie set. He does whatever is needed to ensure that everything goes smoothly, from maintaining the 38-foot medical unit to escorting patients up the steps, taking their blood pressure and giving vision and hearing tests. Marta Pavlicek, RN, often calls on him to sit at her side and distract children with conversation while she’s giving vaccinations.

“We’ve been doing this for years now and it works like magic,” he says. “I just flow with whatever Marta says.”

With his large frame, LaMont towers over COACH’s youngest patients, but he quickly puts them at ease with his gentle manner, broad smile and playful banter. He says he’s learned a lot from Marta about how to comfort anxious children.

“She’s full of knowledge and wisdom. You can’t help but love and learn from someone like her. She keeps me on my toes.”

LaMont says the best part of his job is seeing children benefit from services they probably would not receive if the mobile medical unit didn’t visit their neighborhood: “Some parents cry because they’re so grateful for what we do for their kids.”
Mobilizing Health Resources

Cedars-Sinai’s two fully-equipped mobile medical units, staffed by healthcare professionals from the hospital, deliver a wide range of services at no cost to some of Los Angeles County’s neediest neighborhoods.

The units—provided by the COACH for Kids and Their Families® program—make regular stops at schools, homeless shelters and other community sites in areas including Crenshaw/Mid-City, Pico-Union, Downtown/Skid Row and Hollywood/West Hollywood. Following are some key facts about COACH:

- Since its inception in 1994, the COACH program has provided more than 250,000 healthcare visits to more than 100,000 children and their families.
- Most of the patients served live below the federal poverty level.
- COACH provides free health services on a regular basis at about 60 community sites in 28 zip codes and periodically visits more than 60 additional sites.
- Over the years, the program has expanded from medical services to include assistance from social workers, parent education and support groups, counseling and crisis intervention, referrals to community resources, dental care, nutrition education, children’s play groups in homeless shelters, and housing referrals.
- The COACH mobile medical staff is bilingual (English/Spanish).
- The COACH program helps train RN students from Mount St. Mary’s School of Nursing and UCLA School of Nursing, as well as MSW students from UCLA School of Social Work and USC School of Social Work.

“My grandmother used to take me to COACH, and now I take my three kids to the same nurse practitioner. I trust her. My one-year-old was premature, and the nurse taught me how to take care of her, step by step. She’s never been sick, not once.”

IEASHA HOWARD
Watts resident and longtime COACH patient
First she lost her job, then her health insurance. And then Alison Engel got very sick.

In her worst moments as she went through tests at Cedars-Sinai while experiencing severe headaches, she was afraid she’d be sent home because she couldn’t pay her hospital bills. The tests showed her headaches were caused by a cerebrospinal fluid leak. She went through major spinal surgery and was hospitalized for more than a month as she was treated by a team of leading specialists at Cedars-Sinai.

One day a Cedars-Sinai social worker came to her hospital room and explained how to apply for financial assistance. Months later, at her West Hollywood apartment, Alison cries when she recalls receiving the news that Cedars-Sinai had granted her application.

As part of its Community Benefit commitment, Cedars-Sinai provides millions of dollars in free and part-pay care each year. Eligibility is based on income level and family size, among other factors.

The California Healthcare Association recommends that hospitals use 300 percent of the federal poverty level as a basis for determining charity care eligibility. To help a greater number of people avoid facing a financial crisis as a result of a health crisis, Cedars-Sinai provides financial assistance to those in its service area who earn up to 450 percent of the federal poverty level—and does not count homes, cars and other personal possessions as income. Cedars-Sinai’s more inclusive policy would, for example, enable a family of four with an income of $95,000 a year to qualify for an 85 percent reduction in their hospital bill.

Learning that Cedars-Sinai would pay her hospital bills was a huge relief for Alison, who faced a long recovery period before she could resume her job search.

In a letter to the Patient Financial Services Department, she expressed surprise to find such generosity and compassion in a large institution. She thanked the many individuals who “…without meeting me, or knowing much about me, came to my aid and offered help in the same way that a family member or good friend would offer love and support in a difficult time.”
The waiting room at the health clinic across the street from the Los Angeles Mission’s homeless shelter on Skid Row is full, but Rebecca Martin, MD, never seems to rush. The Cedars-Sinai internal medicine chief resident takes time to ask every patient about their medical history and medications, and to make notes that will be kept for future reference.

She dispenses health information along with prescriptions, always on the lookout for serious conditions that require immediate attention. Every two weeks, she dedicates an afternoon to working at the “Mission clinic” run by Los Angeles Christian Health Centers, or at the Saban Free Clinic (formerly known as the Los Angeles Free Clinic). She’s one of many Cedars-Sinai medical residents who provide health services at free clinics around Los Angeles as part of their training.

“It’s a great learning experience because I’m able to make decisions about how to treat a wide variety of diseases,” she says. “It’s also very satisfying to be able to help the homeless take better care of their health. I feel joy as I see diabetics change their diet and start to exercise and dramatically improve their glucose control as a result.”

The presence of the medical residents helps expand the number of patients who can be seen at clinics that provide a safety net for the uninsured and the poor in the greater Los Angeles area. In its role as a partner with these clinics, Cedars-Sinai also provides hospital care for some patients who need more specialized treatment.

Residents from Cedars-Sinai’s internal medicine program and many specialty programs also see patients at the Venice Family Clinic and Clínica Oscar Romero, which operates in the Pico-Union/Westlake and Boyle Heights/East Los Angeles neighborhoods. In addition, residents training in various specialties see patients at county medical facilities and at the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center, among other sites in the community.
As the only private, non-profit hospital in Los Angeles County designated as a Level I trauma center—and one of only four such hospitals in the county—Cedars-Sinai fills a critical need for highly specialized surgical trauma care.

About 1,600 trauma patients are treated at Cedars-Sinai each year, and the most common causes of injuries are falls and motor vehicle crashes. The Medical Center meets strict standards to receive Level I verification from the American College of Surgeons. The Trauma Service oversees many aspects of treatment, from the time a trauma patient enters the Emergency Department to surgery and critical care, ward care and clinic follow-up.

Cedars-Sinai also works to save lives before injuries occur by offering community education that promotes safety for kids, discourages teens from drinking and driving, and helps older people prevent falls. Prevention efforts include screening trauma patients for signs of substance abuse.

“Our social workers do screening for alcohol and offer referrals. These are teachable moments. A brief intervention can be a turning point in a patient’s life,” says Trauma Program Manager Heidi Hotz, RN.

“...healthcare is a right, not a privilege.’ Thanks to the dedicated Cedars-Sinai residents who train at our clinic, that’s a reality for our patients who benefit from receiving excellent primary and preventive care.”

ABBE LAND
Co-CEO
The Saban Free Clinic
Art for Therapy’s Sake

David’s dad has been in and out of jail for gang-related crimes. The fifth-grader is small for his age and has a stutter, which makes him a magnet for bullies.

The one place where he can talk about his problems is the Share and Care art therapy session he goes to once a week. While a small group of students draw and discuss their artworks with gentle guidance from counselor Ossie Mair, their feelings come tumbling out. This is a safe environment where anger can be expressed without clenched fists.

The Psychological Trauma Center, based at Cedars-Sinai, offers Share and Care in nearly 20 elementary schools and several middle schools and high schools in the Los Angeles area.

David (not his real name) has been part of Share and Care for about four years. “He keeps coming because he needs the support,” Ossie says. “He talks about being chased and beaten up by other kids, but he’s resilient. He’s hanging in there—he hasn’t joined a gang.”

Most children in Share and Care have been referred by teachers because they’re having academic, behavior or social problems. Many are growing up around gang and domestic violence and substance abuse. Some have lost loved ones—including young siblings—in gang shootings.

Their drawings make powerful statements about their struggle to cope with trauma. “Children can express feelings through art that they can’t express any other way,” says Suzanne Silverstein, founder of the Psychological Trauma Center.

Share and Care fills a crucial need because state budget cutbacks have nearly eliminated funding for school counseling services, she adds. “Many of the kids in our program have no one they can talk to. Through Share and Care, they discover they are not alone.”
Teens Helping Teens

The 17-year-old girl was contemplating suicide when she called TEEN LINE. She had been a victim of date rape, as well as physical and emotional abuse at home. At the other end of the line when she placed the call asking for help was another teenager who talked with her for more than an hour and finally persuaded her to seek professional help.

Many teens in crisis feel that adults can’t possibly understand what they’re going through. The hotline based at Cedars-Sinai trains teen volunteers to listen to their peers’ problems, discuss options and make referrals to community resources. Each year, more than 10,000 teens contact the program’s hotline, email and Live Chat services, and TEEN LINE’s website receives more than 140,000 visits from around the world. Teens reach out to the hotline as they struggle with problems related to abuse, drugs and alcohol, divorce, depression, homelessness, gangs, pregnancy, eating disorders and relationships, among other issues.

“Our program provides a safe, confidential way for teens to talk things out with a peer who can understand and who will listen but not judge,” says Elaine Leader, executive director of TEEN LINE.

The hotline, open from 6 to 10 p.m. daily, has been helping teens for three decades. TEEN LINE also offers workshops at schools and other community sites on such issues as teen suicide, teens and tolerance, and growing up gay.

“The Share and Care program gives children with social and emotional needs a chance to express themselves through art. Among a small group of students, they learn to support each other rather than tear each other down. As they develop coping skills, they’re able to concentrate on learning.”

SUSAN WANG
Principal
Broadway Elementary School
Venice

“The Share and Care program gives children with social and emotional needs a chance to express themselves through art. Among a small group of students, they learn to support each other rather than tear each other down. As they develop coping skills, they’re able to concentrate on learning.”

SUSAN WANG
Principal
Broadway Elementary School
Venice
A small group of medical students, residents and fellows gather around a conference table in front of a big-screen TV with Roxy Szeftel, MD, director of Child Psychiatry at Cedars-Sinai. She leads a discussion about the next case as they wait for a video conference to begin. Soon the connection is made with the Kern Regional Center in Bakersfield and Aaron Swain, a child with autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, appears on the screen along with his parents.

Dr. Szeftel, known as “Dr. TV” by her young patients, observes for a while as Aaron plays with some toys, then asks him a few questions. He responds with more words than she had expected and she tells his parents, “This kid is going to talk. He’s on his own path, and language is coming on his own time.”

This session is part of Cedars-Sinai’s Telepsychiatry Developmental Disabilities Service, which gives children who live in remote areas of California access to a program that offers the most advanced expertise on how to treat psychiatric disorders related to autism, Asperger’s syndrome, mental retardation and other developmental disabilities.

“Teleclinics” are held three or four days a week by several Cedars-Sinai psychiatry faculty. The consultations are arranged through California Regional Centers for Developmental Disabilities around the state. “More than half of the children we see speak less than 50 words, but we can tell a lot by observing them,” says Dr. Szeftel, who follows up each consultation by sending recommendations to the child’s primary doctor.

She helps get the right diagnosis and treatment for these children, including medication as well as addressing behavioral, social, academic and psychological issues. “We want to help these kids make the most gains that they possibly can,” she says.
Earning the Right Kind of Respect

Diana Marquez took a hard look at her life after her best friend was critically injured in a drive-by shooting near her home in South Los Angeles.

She was about to start high school, but didn’t think she could stay focused on her studies in this environment. “I wanted to do something better in my life than claim a hood, but I was hanging out with the wrong group,” she says.

Diana decided to follow her older brother’s lead and enroll at Fairfax High School in West Hollywood. This led her to Cedars-Sinai’s Youth Employment & Development (YED) program, which brings Fairfax students to the hospital in their junior and senior years to learn job skills and receive mentoring from healthcare professionals. Many YED students come from disadvantaged homes and difficult environments. Nearly all end up earning high school diplomas and going to college. Some now work at Cedars-Sinai.

Diana’s older brother went through YED and became a pre-med student at San Francisco State University. She recently completed her second year with YED and graduated from high school. Her YED experience included doing office tasks for the Pediatric Inflammatory Bowel Disease Program at Cedars-Sinai.

Interacting with healthcare professionals at Cedars-Sinai and observing them in their roles broadened her thinking about her future career. “I love children and I wanted to be a pediatrician, but now I want to keep my options open,” she says.

The next big step in Diana’s life is attending UC Riverside as a biomedical engineering major. When she looks back on her decision to remove herself from a peer group that was influenced by gangs, the word that comes to her mind is “respect.”

“The hood, you get respect when people fear you. I learned a different kind of respect at Fairfax High School and Cedars-Sinai. I learned that respect is being admired for who you are and what you do.”
The high school students are wide-eyed as they walk the corridors of Cedars-Sinai during a tour led by Carmen Adams, RN. At one point, she asks the group of about eight students to put on green scrubs and masks so they can visit an operating room that’s not in use. They’re thrilled to enter a world they’ve seen only on TV.

Daniel Bachar, RN, walks into the orthopedic surgery OR just after the students. He’s startled to encounter a group of teens, but immediately shifts into teaching mode and answers questions about the imaging cameras and other surgical equipment. “You learn something new every day in this job,” he says.

When it’s time to move on, the students fold their scrubs to keep as souvenirs. “That was awesome,” says one senior from nearby Hamilton High School who wants to become a nurse.

She’s one of about 125 students from six high schools who have come to hear a series of talks by Cedars-Sinai nurses and get a behind-the-scenes view of the hospital.

“Our goal is to help relieve the nursing shortage by inspiring students to go into this field,” says Andrea Perry, Cedars-Sinai’s Health Careers Academy program manager. “As our speakers share the struggles they’ve faced and talk about how their careers evolved, the students see that there is no single, straight career path, and this gives them hope that they can succeed.”

The event is a collaborative effort involving the Medical Center’s Health Careers Academy and its Geri and Richard Brawerman Nursing Institute.
Surgeons for a Day

When students in seventh and eighth grades get to perform virtual surgery on a phantom skull using 3-D imaging, look at tumors under a microscope, perform laser and DNA experiments, and chat with brain surgeons, they get the idea that a career in this field could be pretty cool.

Keith Black, MD, a Cedars-Sinai neurosurgeon and the Ruth and Lawrence Harvey Chair in Neuroscience, created the annual Brainworks event in 1998 to spark this kind of interest by bringing underrepresented students from Los Angeles area schools to Cedars-Sinai to experience “a day in the life” of a neurosurgeon.

“Our goal is to fire a passion for science and medicine by giving students a chance to discover the excitement that comes from helping patients and solving medical problems through research,” says Dr. Black, who is chair of the Cedars-Sinai Department of Neurosurgery and director of the Maxine Dunitz Neurosurgical Institute, which sponsor the event.

The students spend a day going from one interactive station to another, conducting experiments, exploring the tools of the trade—from surgical instruments to rehabilitation equipment—and interacting with clinical scientists and surgeons, among others.

“I decided I wanted to be a nurse when I was a high school student, working in General Internal Medicine as part of the hospital’s Youth Employment & Development program. I saw how nurses touched people’s lives like nobody else. I had a great feeling of achievement when I became a nurse at Cedars-Sinai. It felt like coming home.”

IRYNA ZHEREBTSOVA, RN
Critical Care Nurse
Cedars-Sinai
Caring for People at Risk

Cedars-Sinai’s wide-ranging efforts to promote community health address such problems as obesity, diabetes and heart disease, which our research shows are among the biggest health issues in the Los Angeles region. We focus primarily on providing services and resources for those who are most at risk and have the least access to medical care.

Among the ways we help to improve our community’s health are:

- Providing free and part-pay hospital services for the uninsured and those with limited means.
- Teaching elementary schoolchildren—and parents—how to protect their health by eating better and exercising more.
- Providing clinical services in underserved communities through mobile medical units and free and community clinics around Los Angeles that serve uninsured and underinsured residents.
- Raising teens’ awareness of the dangers of drinking and driving.
- Motivating seniors to remain active and teaching them how to exercise safely.
- Providing flu shots for the elderly and other at-risk individuals.
- Participating in health fairs where Cedars-Sinai nurses provide screening and education on high blood pressure, diabetes, breast cancer and other medical conditions.
- Training the next generation of healthcare professionals.
- Conducting innovative research that leads to major medical advancements.

Identifying Needs

Just beyond Cedars-Sinai’s campus, in the area within a 10-mile radius of the Medical Center, nearly 50 percent of the households earn less than $35,000 a year. We see a wide range of health issues among the disadvantaged in our community, so we conduct a study every three years to determine the most significant unmet needs and identify disparities in health status and disease risk by age and racial and ethnic group.

This Community Needs Assessment provides detailed information that guides us as we develop a Community Benefit Plan each year outlining strategies for addressing health needs in underserved communities.

We establish priorities with help from our partners in the community, which include schools, local government, senior centers, and health and human service programs, among other agencies that have first-hand knowledge of community needs.
Helping in Many Ways

The following breakdown of our Community Benefit programs and services captures the breadth of our efforts to meet our community’s health needs. Each category represents an annual investment of millions of dollars to help thousands of people stay healthy or get well.

Charity Care
We provide free and part-pay services to those who meet established criteria for financial assistance.

Unpaid Cost of State Programs
Those who qualify for Medi-Cal may need care that isn’t covered under this state program for the poor. Community Benefit funds help cover the unpaid cost of services for Medi-Cal patients. Cedars-Sinai has one of the highest Medi-Cal patient volumes among non-county hospitals in California.

Unpaid Cost of Specialty Government Programs
We also cover the unpaid cost of services for indigent patients in various means-tested government programs provided through agencies such as the Veterans Administration and the Los Angeles Police Department.

Other Community Benefit Programs
We offer hundreds of community-based programs for people of all ages in neighborhoods where needs are greatest. These include health education and immunization programs and screenings for such conditions as cardiovascular disease, depression, diabetes and hypertension. We offer graduate medical education and many other educational programs for health professionals. Our leading scientists conduct translational and clinical research that results in new treatments for a broad spectrum of diseases. We also provide extensive programs in the community to promote better health among the elderly, and offer financial assistance that helps cover unpaid costs of services for Medicare patients.

New Discoveries, New Hope for Patients

Cedars-Sinai’s Community Benefit initiatives include innovative research that has a far-reaching impact on the lives of patients worldwide. Through more than 900 major projects at Cedars-Sinai’s Burns and Allen Research Institute, clinical scientists are developing new treatments for cancer, heart disease, neurological and metabolic disorders and many other conditions. The Medical Center ranks among the nation’s top non-university hospitals for competitive research funding from the National Institutes of Health.

Our researchers challenge the status quo in ways that offer new hope to patients. For example, the idea that heart damage is irreversible has long been the prevailing wisdom in medicine. Not anymore. In 2009, Eduardo Marbán, MD, director of the Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute, performed the first experimental procedure using adult cells from a patient’s own heart in an attempt to heal muscle damage caused by a heart attack. Other researchers across many disciplines are investigating the role of genetics in causing and potentially treating a wide range of diseases, including diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease and cancer.

Physician-scientists at Cedars-Sinai are dedicated to transferring new knowledge from the lab to the clinic as quickly as possible to improve outcomes for patients.
Learning from the Best

In addition to our many community programs that teach people how to protect their health, we also provide education for current and future healthcare professionals. The opportunity to be mentored by world-renowned physicians and scientists attracts the nation’s best to the graduate medical education program at Cedars-Sinai.

Residents and fellows train in more than 50 specialties and subspecialties. They gain clinical experience with a diverse patient population as they develop skills in a variety of healthcare settings, including free clinics around Los Angeles. They also pursue new discoveries as partners in biomedical research.

We offer many other education programs for health professionals, including degree programs and extensive educational resources for nurses and nursing students.

Generous Doses of Empathy

A wide variety of support groups at Cedars-Sinai provide an ongoing source of emotional support, health information and practical tips to help participants improve their quality of life. For example, young stroke survivors help each other confront the difficulties of suffering a disabling health crisis in the prime of their lives as members of “One Stroke Ahead: Young Person’s Stroke Support Group” at Cedars-Sinai. We also have a support group for older stroke survivors, as well as groups for patients with lung cancer, Parkinson’s disease, diabetes and aphasia. These and other groups are open to the community.

A Labor of Love

About 2,000 volunteers, ages 14 to 102, collectively contribute more than 200,000 hours a year in a labor of love that demonstrates their extraordinary dedication to helping Cedars-Sinai meet the community’s health needs. Volunteers perform a wide variety of duties throughout the Medical Center to support patients—providing assistance at mealtimes for those who can’t feed themselves, for example—or free nurses from administrative tasks so they can spend more time at the bedside.

Our volunteers often connect directly with patients in ways that lift their spirits—and contribute to healing. For example, cancer survivors return to encourage those who are now undergoing treatment. And former patients known as “transplant ambassadors” share their stories with patients who are about to receive transplants, walking them through the experience to help ease their fears so they can focus on healing.