Volunteer Services Launches First Pre-Med Summer Scholars Program

BY SPENCER ELLIOTT

UCLA Health proudly launched its first Pre-Med Summer Scholars Program for high school students interested in pursuing a medical career. Over the course of this five-week program, students will further explore their interest in the field of medicine, learn about research programs and medical specialties, and interact closely with UCLA students. Thanks to the coordinated efforts of the UCLA Health staff and volunteers, students will gain valuable insight and experience.

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Dear Volunteers,

I hope all of you are enjoying the summer and spending time relaxing and being with family. This has been a busy summer in Volunteer Services as we launch a new program called the Pre-Med Summer Scholars. This program is geared for high school students interested in exploring and pursuing a medical profession. We have over 100 in the program and have been working as a team to coordinate the schedules and activities of the students. Highlights include a tour of the robotics and hyperbaric departments, a physician guest panel speaking about their careers, and a career day where the students can find out about different health professions. Despite the intense coordination effort involved, the entire office is pleased at how the program is running and feel the students will benefit greatly.

We are also working on developing an adult wayfinding program to assist our patients and guests in the lobby area. This will be a mobile position whereby the volunteer will circulate throughout the lobby and escort individuals to their destination. The hospital can be a daunting place to visit, and for those who have never been to our facility before it can be quite overwhelming. The position will involve walking, so if you know of anyone who likes to stay active, this may be a good fit for them. Please refer anyone you know who might be interested in the program to Sandra Molina, our adult volunteer coordinator.

I look forward to our many plans ahead and to our continued work together. It is a pleasure to know and work with each and every one of you. Stay cool and keep up the great work you’re doing in the hospital.

Carey McCarthy, MPH
Director of Volunteer Services
Hannah Shon, and Maria Afable; William Chou was awarded the Barbara and Bruce Speiser award.

The Auxiliary volunteer awards were presented by Carey McCarthy, director of volunteers, and Silva Thomas, director of the Care Extender Program. The majority of student award winners are Care Extenders, and each year the group consistently raises the bar in balancing hundreds of volunteer service hours, other community service, research, hobbies and activities, in addition to their school work and sometimes employment. The volunteers must complete a minimum of 150 hours in the calendar year to be eligible for an award, in addition to having a high GPA, a good recommendation letter, extracurricular activities, and the ability to clearly express their volunteer role at UCLA. Winners from the volunteer program were: Shirley Chang, Greg Kojayan, Steven Tohmasi, Matthew Basinger, Alexis Sherer, Samantha Duffy, Antranig Mesrobian, James Severin, Christopher Phan, Alicia Sherents, Kenneth Chow and Miguel Mendoza. Arpine Galstyan received the Maddie Katz Memorial Award, Scott Messier received the Mary K. Holmes and Kay Handler Honorary Award, and Jaycob Avaylon received the David Geffen School of Medicine Humanism Award.

The last awards presented were for the medical students. Lee Miller, MD, associate dean of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, presented three awards: the Dr. Sherman Mellinkoff Award to Monique McDermoth, the Martin B. Covel, MD, Memorial Award to Daniela Rangel Orozco, and the Barbara and Martin Pops Award to Ameer Elbuluk. Theodore Hall, MD, associate dean for admissions and professor of clinical radiology at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, ended the awards segment of the program by presenting the Ormie and Baldwin Lamson Award to Taylor Hobson, the Ann Bauman Emergency Memorial Award to Jacob Gutierrez, and the Dr. Gerald S. Levey Award to Mohammad Karimzada.

Listening to some of the varied hardships these students have overcome (whether financial, physical, familial, emotional or otherwise) impresses the audience every year. We enjoy hearing these triumphant stories and are appreciative the Auxiliary recognizes these students for their dedication to improving themselves and their communities one step at a time.

In Memoriam

Kathleen Yuhl was a spiritual care volunteer at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center for over 33 years and contributed over 10,000 hours of volunteer service. She passed away peacefully at age 86. She is survived by her daughter Jennifer. We will miss her presence.
People-Animal Connection Volunteer Recognition Tea

Every other year, the People-Animal Connection holds a Volunteer Recognition Tea to honor the outstanding teams that dedicate their time and effort to PAC. This year, the Tea was held on Wednesday, June 15th at the UCLA Faculty Center. The afternoon’s program consisted of tea and snacks, guest speakers, and awards presentations.

Each PAC volunteer received a personalized mug with their therapy dog on it to thank them and their dog for the service they provide. PAC Director Erin Rice delivered a warm welcome to all volunteers, staff and other invited guests. Erin highlighted and thanked the volunteers for all of the hard work and commitment each of them puts in during their hospital visits. She gave a special thanks to those teams that had visited the UCLA campus to comfort students and faculty, following the tragic shooting on June 1. Following Erin’s welcome, Chief Patient Experience Officer Tony Padilla was invited to the podium to present the Paula Kent Meehan Outstanding PAC Team Award for 2016. This year, the award was presented to Marilee Bradford and her dachshund Tovah, PAC’s longest working therapy team. Tony shared some kind words showcasing their work with PAC:

“Marilee and Tovah started with PAC back when you could count the number of teams on only one hand. Over the years, they’ve become valued members of the hospital and shaped the culture of PAC with their dedication and compassion. Tovah’s loving presence and sweet nature have made her an ideal therapy dog, offering comfort to thousands she’s met at UCLA Health through the years. The duo participates in numerous events like the Valentine’s Day Delivery, the Fourth of July Parade and the Pediatric Halloween Parade. Additionally, Marilee has fearlessly led the PAC Holiday Caroling for many years. We are grateful for the 15 years of service Marilee and Tovah have given to UCLA Health and PAC.”
Following the award presentation, Ellen Thrasher, PhD, from the Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA, spoke on the impact of the PAC therapy dogs on her patients. Dr. Thrasher expressed how having the PAC dogs in the therapy group sessions is incredibly beneficial to the patients’ mental and social well-being. After Dr. Thrasher’s remarks, Danielle Salomon and Robert Freelo from the UCLA Powell Library spoke to the guests about PAC Stressbusters, which is a program where the therapy dogs visit the library on campus during finals week. They shared many pictures and stories, and conveyed the excitement and appreciation the students have for the PAC teams.

The last awards of the afternoon were the PAC Team Recognition Plaques, presented to the 11 teams that were retiring their dogs from the PAC program. Carey McCarthy, the Director of Volunteer Services, and Erin Rice presented these plaques to each of the volunteers present, thanking them for their years of service.

Dear Friends, Colleagues and Staff,

As fiscal year 2015-16 draws to a close, I reflect on my first term as Auxiliary President. To say the time flew by would be an understatement, especially considering the many projects completed during the past 12 months.

We are proud of the numerous ongoing programs that we fund: our daily commitment to Patient Aid; our support of People-Animal Connection and Tiverton House; the ever-growing Adopt-a-Family holiday program; Volunteer Medical and Nursing Student Awards; Fall Volunteer Luncheon, newspapers for in-hospital patients; and fulfillment of wishes large and small throughout UCLA Health.

And this year the Auxiliary approved and awarded 40 grants, totaling $472,439.63!

So I want to thank you for your loyal support of our hospital gift shops, the 200 Medical Plaza snack shop and our thrift store, because the proceeds from sales help to make all we do possible. And please know that we always welcome your feedback, which helps us to be the best we can be for you.

I want to thank everyone who generously donated items to the thrift shop as well as those who sent their dues this year. And for the bequests we received, our heartfelt gratitude.

Hats off to our terrific staff for jobs well done. A special shout out to our retail director, Kim Failla, and to our administrator, Hanna Fairchild, Bravo!

And, lastly, my thanks to our wonderful Board members for all of their hard work, dedication and support. They inspire me every day.

My best wishes to all for a happy, healthy and safe summer.

Most sincerely,

Elinor Green
President, UCLA Health Auxiliary
Success Story: Nina Pung

What schools did you graduate from and what was your major?

I did my undergrad at UCLA and received by B.S. in MIMG (microbiology, immunology, and molecular genetics). I was pre-med at the time. After that, I went to Georgetown in DC for nursing where I received my BSN. Then, I went back to UCLA to receive my masters as a nurse practitioner.

How do you feel that Care Extenders has helped you achieve your professional goals?

Before Care Extenders, I didn’t know much about nursing. It was in the L&D department where I fell in love with nursing and OB. So, the program really opened my eyes to what nurses do, the impact they have on people’s lives, and the possibilities the career has to offer.

As a nurse practitioner today, I am able to make more decisions to positively affect the health of my patients.

If you could give any professional advice to a current Care Extender, what would it be?

It is important to have an open mind and be open to the possibility of a potential change in what you want to do in your career. I was set for going to medical school and being a physician but with the experiences I had along the way, it made me realize that there were other things out there that I ended up enjoying even more. Also, get into extracurricular activities with an open mind knowing that you will expose yourself to new possibilities.

What motivated you to pursue a career in healthcare?

My dad was a physician and he suggested that I also go into that field. I knew I loved practicing medicine. Along the way, the UCLA Health Care Extender Internship Program introduced me to many careers in the medical field, one of them being, a nurse practitioner. I was able to use my experience as a bedside nurse to help make me better as an advanced practice nurse. As a nurse practitioner today, I am able to make more decisions to positively affect the health of my patients.

What do you do as a nurse practitioner?

I visit every patient’s room and I go through their lab scores. Because I work in OB, I conduct an ultrasound on the patient to see how far along they have come and to find any complications. The gestational age determines which appropriate test must be ordered. Then, I evaluate the ultrasound reports, X-rays, or blood tests. I educate the patient on what they should expect. I also monitor medications to see how well patients are reacting to them.

What is the most rewarding thing about your job?

It is such a rewarding profession! For starters, I have a strong influence on people’s lives. I am able to give them advice, reassure them, educate them, take the time to listen to them and practice cultural diversity.
Peter Sego, non-student volunteer assists patients at information desk

The commitment, dedication and hard work that our volunteers devote to UCLA Health convey the robust mission and values that comprise our institution. Peter Sego, a non-student volunteer, has made an outstanding positive impression on many patients and visitors over the past 10 years at UCLA Health. Sego volunteers at the information desk at 200 Medical Plaza, and beneath his compassionate smile and helpful hand, he holds a miraculous story.

As the drift of patients and visitors pass by the information desk, Peter engages in numerous encounters with people from all over the world. The volunteers of UCLA Health meet innumerable patients who are under pressure, nervous and scared as they face many overwhelming and daunting medical conditions. Peter connects and empathizes with what many patients are going through, especially those who are pre/post-transplant.

In 2005, Peter was diagnosed with colon cancer. After a year of intensive chemotherapy, his disease went into remission. In order to deal with the psychological and social effects of the chemotherapy, Peter decided to focus his efforts on helping others and began volunteering at the gift shop in 300 Medical Plaza. Peter expressed to us that “the good news of course was the remission, but the bad news was that the chemo was so hard on my liver that I now had to face a liver transplant.” Although a transplant can be worrisome, Peter remained optimistic — he was fortunate to find a superb hepatologist and his transplant was an incredible success.

Remembering the therapeutic value of volunteering, Peter began to volunteer at the information desk at the 200 Medical Plaza as soon as he was able to following his transplant. For him, the best part of being a volunteer at UCLA Health is helping the individuals who come in and out of the doors, and seeing how grateful they are when he assists them. Peter enjoys the challenge of answering the assortment of questions he receives and being able to speak to the patients and visitors who are not from the area.

When a patient approaches the information desk and asks for directions to the Pfleger Liver Institute, Peter makes a special connection. He can see the feelings welling up in their eyes — the same ones that he had prior to his transplant. Peter reassures patients and offers them hope and optimism for the ordeal they will be facing. Sometimes the simple words, “Yes, it is possible to lead a happy, healthy life following transplant” are just what a patient needs to hear and makes a significant difference in their outlook. Peter feels privileged that in addition to helping patients solve their problems and giving directions, he is able to provide hope and give them strength to go on with their challenging journey.

Aside from volunteering at the information desk, Peter enjoys spending time with family. He is married to his wife, Claudia, and has three granddaughters. In addition, Peter is an active lawn bowler which helps keep him fit and active. He also volunteers at the Getty Museum which he finds fulfilling and rewarding.

Peter is just one of the 4,000 volunteers who have contributed their time to improve the patient experience and make Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center a better place for the community and patients who come from all over the world. Thank you, Peter, for exemplifying our core values and making a positive impact on the patient experience!
Our winter edition article on Judy Bin-Nun was written by Kanal Wahi, not Judy Bin-Nun