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## Pledging to pursue health careers

By: Liane M. Roth Valley Life Editor



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Twenty-six eighth-graders from Mesa Intermediate School in Palmdale graduated from Kaiser Permanente Antelope Valley Medical Office's inaugural Hippocrates Circle Program on Wednesday, Dec. 15, at the John

P. Eliopoulos Hellenic Center in Lancaster.

More than 200 people including Kaiser Permanente doctors, nurses, medical staff, parents and guests attended the ceremony that included a dinner, student presentations, a talk by David Bronstein, M.D. on the "Next Steps in Physician Journey," and the graduation procession.

"The students are our future," Kaiser Permanente physician Dr. Pollyann Gowrie-Knox wrote in the ceremony's program. "We want to encourage them to follow their dreams and become doctors. Anything is possible if they put their mind to it."

Several students spoke about their experiences since joining the course and why they are interested in pursuing careers in medicine.

Mesa Intermediate School Principal Ruth James talked about the importance of encouraging all students in continuing their education and said she was proud her school was chosen to launch the first Hippocrates Circle Program in the Valley.


The curriculum is designed to introduce minority middle school students to careers in medicine, Kaiser Permanente officials said, as well as to encourage them to set high academic goals.

Through information, education and interaction with medical professionals, authorities said, the company is helping seventh- and eighth-graders understand what careers in the medical field are available.

The students began the course with an informational introduction on Sept.

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29 at their school, which included a healthy meal of garden burgers, turkey burgers and chicken hot dogs prepared and served by members of Rotary Club of Lancaster as part of Kaiser Permanente's Thrive program.

Physician testimonials were given as well as statements from students.

Speaking at the initial meeting were Dr. Gowrie-Knox; Dr. Radha Peram; Dr. Francisco Marquez; Dr. Khodam Rostomian; and Dr. John Sasaki, officials said.

Those interested in participating were invited to take the Hippocratic Oath as part of the curriculum.

The second session on Oct. 14 included a financial aid presentation for students and their families on how to prepare for college and medical school, a costly undertaking for many of the economically-challenged students.

On Oct. 20 the students toured the University of Southern California Medical School, representatives said, as an incentive to focusing on their studies in high school and college, representatives said.

The final session included a student tour of the Kaiser Permanente Lancaster medical offices including the laboratory, pediatrics, diagnostic imaging, ophthalmology, orthopedics and cardiology departments.

Students also learned about cardiopulmonary resuscitation, how to take vital signs, and a bit about blood pressure.

Representatives from Kaiser Permanente Health Education gave a presentation on healthy eating as well.

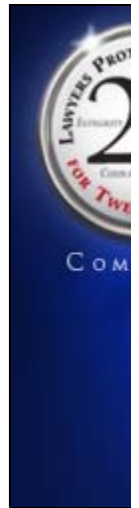
The program started ten years ago in San Diego when physician Ricardo Sistos and his colleagues mentored 30 youngsters, according to the information provided by Kaiser Permanente representatives.

This was Kaiser Permanente Antelope Valley's first year starting the program and the company was extremely excited to bring aboard Mesa Intermediate School, according to Dionne Hunte, MHA, project manager II, medical group administration, and Antelope Valley medical offices.

The graduation ceremony not only recognized the youngsters' completion of the Hippocrates Circle Program experience, representatives said, it also reinforced the message to the students who are about to enter high school "that they have many people who believe in them and that their educational journey is an important achievement for them and their families."

Dr. Gowrie-Knox, who was the physician mentor for the Valley program, presented each graduating student with a certificate and a real medical stethoscope to help them keep their eyes on their goal of entering the medical field, she said.

Closing remarks were made by Dr. David Kohl, Dr. Gowrie-Knox and Linda



Lawson.

The success of the inaugural Hippocrates Circle Program was due in large part to the efforts of Kaiser Permanente staff including Hunte, program coordinator chair; Sandy Petersen, administration champion co-chair; Dr. Gowrie-Knox, physician champion and mentor; Kelly Scroger, public affairs; physician mentors Dr. Rostomian, Dr. Peram, Dr. Sasaki and Dr. Bronstein; and committee members Teena Ginsburg, Lena Grand-Weber, Kimmie Nelson, Deborah Patterson, Helen Tobias, Sonda Hardge, Virginia Farley, Karla Valle and Noemi Gutierrez, representatives said.

Praises were also given to Principal James and her administration's continued support along with the commitment and efforts of the 26 students, their parents and their teachers.

The 2010 graduation class is: Domonique Alonzo-Rael; Amber Arago; Sana Aslam; Jelci Barraza; Itzel Camarena; Hydia Clark; Emily Cooksey; Luis Diaz; Juanita Dodson; Susana Grandon; Antwan Jendon; Dulce Lara; Darryn Madere; Vanessa Martinez; Lisette Mejia; Julianna Navarro; Sergio Olivas; Isela Orantes; Cheyenne Powell; Natalie Quintanilla; Edgar Rodriguez; Gabriela Rodriguez; Mikala Thomas; Chelsea Trujillo; Brian Uribe; and Andrea Velasco.

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