



How about volunteering with the Adopt-A-School program?

Created in 1989, the **Adopt-A-School Project** is an outgrowth of physicians' desire to find innovative ways to improve the health of Sacramento County youth by preventing long-term health problems. The program is designed to take a proactive role in response to the life-threatening or limiting issues of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, AIDS, teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Believing that prevention is the best approach for addressing these community problems, the Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society (SSVMS) Board chooses to focus on students in the school setting. The emphasis of the program is on providing students with the information necessary to make responsible decisions that promote their health now and in the future.

Adopt-A-School was developed originally as a pilot project with 15 physicians and 15 schools. It has expanded to the current level of 40 physicians working in 35 schools in Sacramento County.

Physicians participating in the **Adopt-A-School** program volunteer their time to go to the school an average of twice a month, although some physicians go on a weekly basis. The primary age groups served by the project are grades 4-8. However, we have had very successful programs with both younger and older children. Participating physicians are not

permitted to provide medical services or solicit patients. Each doctor works with school staff to design a program customized to the needs of the particular school. Each doctor is responsible for preparing his or her presentation. The level of participation and frequency of visits to the school vary widely and are based on the school's needs and the volunteer's area of expertise. There may also be a need for a guest speaker on a specific topic on a one-time basis.

Repeated participation of the physician with a school helps build a working relationship and trust between the students and the physician. Many students have never had an opportunity to know a doctor personally.

The SSVMS provides program funding and teaching aides needed for the program's success. The participating schools provide an on-site coordinator who is responsible for administering the program at the school site.

Adopt-A-School is a win-win project. The schools, the students and the medical community learn from each other and benefit from the experience. The physicians who volunteer their time and expertise to work with schools and students care deeply for the well-being of our young people and enjoy the opportunity to work with youngsters in a more casual setting than the doctor's office.

For more information, please call
the Adopt-A-School office at (916) 453-0254.