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By Margaret Jaworski

Helping Hands: Medicine 101

Every Wednesday night, after finishing her homework, Mireya Candelario, 15, a sophomore at Westlake High School in Westlake Village, California, happily begins her heart's work.

At 5:30 P.M. Candelario starts her shift as a teen volunteer at nearby Westminster Free Clinic. The weekly clinic offers medical care to the community's homeless, poor and uninsured. Under the supervision of a nurse, teens like Mireya record medical histories, take vitals and get a dose of what it's like to practice medicine. "They either love it or realize the real thing isn't for them," says clinic founder Steve D. Kamajian, D.O.

Dr. Kamajian organized the program eight years ago after the daughter of an adult volunteer asked if she, too, could help. Now students from surrounding high schools compete to participate. The teens learn to deal with people of different cultures, to develop compassion and patience, and to use their knowledge and intuition to make a diagnosis.

Michelle Levy, 17, a junior at Oak Park High School, has been volunteering since her freshman year. This future neonatologist—a varsity tennis player with a 4.5 grade point average—says she feels "rewarded to know that I am helping patients who would



Under the watchful eye of Dr. Kamajian, Mireya Candelario (left) practices her technique.

otherwise not have access to health care." She adds, "I enjoy developing ongoing relationships with some of the patients. And I feel humbled by the graciousness and gratitude of the people who come to the clinic."

Candelario agrees: "When I first came to Westminster, I was nervous. But Dr. Kamajian helped me develop self-confidence. Now I feel happy that I can help people."