

Problem:

The students in our inner-city schools are bright and capable, but they face daunting challenges both in school and in life. To become productive adults they need more support and guidance than our schools are currently able to offer.

A Few Facts*:

- In some Los Angeles schools, 40% of students live at or below the poverty level, and district-wide 26% are at or below the poverty level. These students usually reside in sub-standard and over-crowded housing
- Many students come from single-parent households, where the adult in the family typically works multiple jobs and long hours, and has no choice but to leave their children alone when they are not in school
- Safe, close and affordable childcare is not available. When younger children are sick, often older students have to stay home to take care of siblings which contributes to poor attendance in school
- The inner city schools have the highest drop-out rates – some as high as 50%
- Many neighborhoods do not have convenient supermarkets or green grocers. Food is purchased at convenience stores, fast food restaurants and small neighborhood markets. Additionally, parks and safe areas to play are limited. Because of cultural factors and lack of information about nutrition and exercise, childhood obesity and cases of early onset diabetes are climbing at an alarming rate and are poised to become a serious problem that will tax our health care system
- While some crime in Los Angeles has declined statistically, gangs, drugs, alcohol abuse, and racial violence often plague crowded, low-income areas. Urban areas of Los Angeles have the highest number of substantiated child abuse and neglect referrals, as well as the highest number of births to teen mothers

SOSMentor has studied these problems and is committed to providing mentoring experiences and educational programs that teach students important life skills and provide opportunities for growth, achievement, leadership, and success. Mentoring youth to help them pursue careers and higher education and make healthy eating and lifestyle choices is a critical component of revitalizing communities.

* City of Los Angeles 2005 – 2006 Children, Youth, and Families Budget and Data Report, prepared by Commission for Children, Youth and Their Families



Solution:

SOSMentor has developed enriching programs that address the issues facing inner-city students while engendering a sense of community involvement and responsibility in the students it serves. All SOSMentor programs include a mentoring as well as a community service component. The timing is right – LAUSD students are now required to complete “service learning credit” for graduation, yet schools are struggling with the task of incorporating this requirement into their curriculum offerings.

This innovative non-profit foundation is the result of work by dedicated people with extensive experience in teaching, curriculum development and creating award-winning mentoring programs that have served as a model in school districts throughout the United States. Partnering with community leaders, businesses, medical and education professionals, SOSMentor addresses the needs of inner city students that are not being met elsewhere.

The approach is through “train the trainer” mentoring – caring adults taking a personal interest in a child – a proven method that works to increase grades, reduce violence and substance abuse, lower the rates of teen pregnancies, while increasing high school graduations and college admissions. Mentored older students then themselves become mentors and assist younger students, as well as their families, reinforcing their lessons and spreading positive messages community-wide.

SOSMentor offers an array of services that enhance student education and their ability to thrive as they become adults.



SOSMentor

SOSMentor, programs of the Socrates Opportunity Scholarship (SOS) Foundation, is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit corporation created by dedicated, highly experienced educators. These devoted individuals recognize the need to support Los Angeles students who are primarily from low-income households with mentoring-based programs to help them succeed in life. SOSMentor works with schools and community leaders to implement programs in the most disadvantaged areas of our city.



SOSMentor is currently seeking business and community partnerships to expand the scope of educational mentoring programs. Both funding and volunteers are needed to have the impact necessary to help students break the cycle of poverty and become responsible adults.

You can make a difference in the future of a child – in the future of our community. We have five great opportunities for you to become involved:

- Join our Board of Directors
- Join one of our committees
- Be an SOSMentor CollegeKnowledge mentor in four one hour after school workshops
- Be an SOSMentor ShapeUp team member in six one hour after school nutrition workshops
- Sponsor the distribution of Virtual College Visits CD sets or the production of new Community College and California State College CD Sets to help students learn about the post high school college degree paths available to them



SOSMentor CollegeKnowledge

Students need to make a connection between the academic learning they receive in school and the education and skills needed for college and career preparation. By matching business professionals with schools, SOSMentor provides students the opportunity to learn about the skills and training necessary to be successful in various careers. SOS mentors become role models to students, sharing important life concepts through their own personal experiences and “real life” perspectives.



SOSMentor’s ten week CollegeKnowledge program provides high school students with college and career mentoring and trains high school juniors to become College Knowledge mentors to freshmen and sophomore students.

In addition to supporting career awareness, SOSMentor has developed Virtual College Visits CD Rom sets of the University of California system and leading Eastern Universities to help students learn about college options without the expense of travel to tour campuses. The focus of Virtual College Visits is on how to select a college that is a good fit for the student’s skills, interests and goals and how to apply for and seek financial aid and scholarships. This program motivates students to aim high and prepare early. It also demystifies the financial aid process and makes clear how good students can attend top colleges regardless of their family’s financial situation.



SOSMentor ShapeUp: Healthy Steps for Healthy Lives

With statistics on obesity and early onset diabetes climbing at alarming rates, SOSMentor is poised to make overweight and obesity history by teaching high school students to be mentors and advocates for healthy eating and exercise. It is estimated that over 38% of LAUSD students are overweight, and many more have little understanding of how nutrition and fitness affect their lives. In addition, diabetes is rapidly becoming our nation's most serious health issue – one that will severely tax our health care system.

SOSMentor's 12-week program, ShapeUp: Healthy Steps for Healthy Lives, provides high school students with education and mentoring in nutrition and fitness. The students participate on the SOSMentor ShapeUp team, and in the first six weeks of the program, they learn important nutrition basics. In the second half of the program, the students use the information they have learned to become nutrition mentors to elementary students in a nearby school.

Funding for the inner city Santee, Belmont, and Garfield High School programs has been provided by the generous support of Nestlé USA, the United States Tennis Association, the Los Angeles Collaborative for Healthy Active Children, the USC Keck School of Medicine, A World Fit For Kids, and the Youth Development Program.



Carole and Dr. Robert Donahue

Carole and Robert Donahue, founders of SOSMentor, are dedicated educators with over 65 years of combined experience helping students. This husband and wife team founded the California Academic Mentor Partnership, which has helped school districts secure over \$3 million in funding to establish academic mentoring programs in their schools. They have worked with major corporations, including Boeing, Home Depot, and Kaiser-Permanente to secure both funding and employee volunteers to help community youth succeed academically.

With a Doctorate in higher education and school finance, Robert recently retired as a public school principal, after serving as a teacher, counselor and administrator for 38 years. He is currently leading SOSMentor and developing curriculum for the programs.

Carole has over 27 years experience as a classroom teacher and program coordinator, and has been recognized for her work in developing mentoring and other support programs for at-risk youth. In 1995, she founded the largest school-based mentoring program in California, which has served as a model for programs in other schools nationwide, earning her national recognition for her innovative approach.

As strong believers in community service, Carole and Robert are members of the Rotary Club of Los Angeles and serve on committees to coordinate youth service programs. Through the Rotary Environmental Committee, Carole has worked with LAUSD Youth Services to provide science-based trips for students from low income communities to the Audubon Center at Debs Park. Additionally, as Chair of the Scholarship Committee, she has worked with high school counselors to encourage students to apply for Career Technical Education and College Scholarships.

Robert and Carole Donahue founded SOSMentor to provide disadvantaged high school students with important resources, information and activities for career and college selection. Today, SOSMentor is working closely with inner-city schools in Los Angeles to provide academic mentoring to help students find their niche and be successful in this world.

SOSMentor, programs of the Socrates Opportunity Scholarship Foundation, is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization that is worthy of your support.

