

We've been calling them our "Doctor Do-Goods." We hear frequently about local health professionals, among many other Lamorindans, who are committed to helping others above and beyond their daily work and in very different ways. Andrea Firth met a group of Moragans who travel to Ecuador

to provide health care, Cathy Tyson talked to a Lafayette pediatrician who brings theater to underprivileged kids closer to home, and Chris Lavin found an Orinda ophthalmologist who offers cataract surgery to patients in Guatemala. We are pleased to present their stories in this three-part feature.

Pediatrician by Day, Producer by Night

By Cathy Tyson



From left, Dave Abrams, Sam Lewis, Kamaria Ousley, Jonathan Smothers
Photo Cathy Tyson

Dr. Sam Lewis, Lafayette pediatrician, could easily go home after a long day at the office treating sick children, have a glass of wine and relax. Instead he's been involved for many years with the Belasco Theater Company. As the volunteer producer of "The Wiz," he's been instrumental in rustling up donations to make this summer production possible in Oakland, as well as offer scholarships to economically disadvantaged youth to participate in performances.

Having seen his own son Rob, a former student at Happy Valley Elementary and Acalanes benefit from Belasco training, Lewis wanted to make theater available to kids who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity. By offering free admission and free bus transportation to prior "Wiz" performances, thanks to many generous donations, a substantial number of students from inner city schools and youth groups were able to see the show. Outreach will continue for this August's shows.

"He is definitely dedicated" said Kamaria Ousley, who plays Dorothy, "the Wiz is a big thing, a great musical. It's also a chance to show African Americans someone that looks like you on stage." Ousley went to Skyline High School and recently graduated from Boston's Berkeley School of Music. She's currently a professional singer at the Apollo. Dave Abrams, the Scarecrow, chimes in "he's always mentoring, like a Dad to me." Abrams will be a freshman at UC Berkeley this fall.

"Dr. Lewis has this inclusive theatrical outlook, doing something positive for city kids," said Jonathan Smothers, looking resplendent in his Cowardly Lion costume. Prior to being in the 2000 production of "The

Wiz," Smothers was a struggling high school student. He's now a senior at San Francisco State University.

"These phenomenally talented kids let me into their lives. They text me all the time and call me when they're sick. It's my church," said Lewis. "My kids are out of the house now, so I have more time. I'm not afraid to ask for things - including donations."

Performances from August 7 – 22 at the Malonga Arts Center, formerly the Alice Arts Center, near the 12th Street BART station. Information on tickets, show times, donations and volunteering at www.belasco.org or call his office at 925-283-8241.