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GOOD VISION IS NOT A LUXURY FOR THOSE IN NEED

As an active member of the San Fernando Valley Optometric Society, Dr. Stevin Minie and others were encouraged several years ago by State Senator Richard Alarcon to volunteer their time to start an optometric clinic at MEND. MEND stands for Meet Each Need with Dignity and is the largest and most comprehensive poverty agency in the San Fernando Valley. MEND has a Medical Clinic that serves impoverished, uninsured, and medically disenfranchised patients in the Valley.

Even though Dr. Minie is busy with work and family, he wants to dedicate time to those in need. He volunteers a half-day each month at MEND's state-of-the-art optometric clinic. Patients come to the clinic for free eye exams and, if needed, free prescription glasses. Among the patients are children who don't do well in school, because they can't see the chalkboard or can't clearly read their textbooks. He also treats patients who suffer from conjunctivitis, and diabetes, and other chronic diseases. Dr. Minie has helped more than three hundred patients since the clinic opened.

More than 200 patients have been on MEND's Vision Clinic waiting list at any

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given time, so the need for volunteer optometrists is great. Dr. Minie says, “The patients are so thankful for our help. On the doctors’ side, there is a great personal feeling knowing you have helped someone.”

Optometrists are encouraged to volunteer as little as three hours a month in the MEND Vision Clinic at a pre-designated time that is based on their scheduling preferences

MEND has been serving a growing number of impoverished families who live in the Northeast part of the Valley for 33 years. More than 38,000 needy individuals receive help *each month* from MEND, including emergency food, clothing, medical and dental care, English as a Second Language classes, job placement, computer and job training, Christmas baskets, home visiting, and other services.

More than 1400 volunteers run and implement MEND programs together with MEND's small staff, and volunteers also take care of fund raising and public relations activities. Because of this emphasis on volunteer involvement, MEND's overhead and fundraising costs are less than 5% of its annual revenue. MEND does not receive government grants to operate its services, so this agency relies on financial donations from individuals, foundation, and businesses, as well as in-kind contributions of food, clothing, medicines, and toys.

By becoming a part of MEND’s optometrist volunteer team, you can:

- Make a difference in someone’s life for a little as 3 hours per month
- Utilize your professional skills in a unique environment
- Meet and network with other healthcare professionals
- Easily fit MEND into your busy schedule according to your availability
- Make use of MEND’s available on-site support staff

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If you are a California- licensed optometrist and would be willing to donate a few hours of time each month to help those in need, please call Nina Vaccaro, MEND Medical Clinic Manager, at (818) 896-0246. You can also visit the MEND website at www.mendpoverty.org.

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