

Clark serves as advocate for homeless

By **VALERIE SWEETEN**
Chronicle correspondent

It's a bright Sunday morning at the Lords of the Street homeless shelter and people are lining up to visit the Houston Outreach Medical Education and Social Services Clinic (HOMES), suffering with a wide variety of problems.

At the heart of the matter, literally and physically, is Dr. Dana Clark, the preceptor of HOMES. Clark is there to guide and oversee teams of medical students from area colleges to ensure that all the up to 16 homeless patients' needs are not overlooked on such an important day.

Teaching students and examining patients with a big smile, gentle touch, and soft voice, Clark is said to embody all that a doctor should be.

Faces in the crowd

Spreading her talents as medical director of Healthcare for the Homeless in Houston, assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine-Department of Family & Community Medicine, and staff physician with Harris County Hospital District, Clark can't wait to tackle each oncoming day.

Boundless energy seems to exude from Clark as she makes the rounds with patients, writes grants, attends conferences, and teaches.

Lara Bull, manager at HOMES, has watched Clark in action for over a year.

"She's emotionally entrenched in her work," Bull said. "She helps renew my belief in what we're doing. She comes to each problem as a patient's advocate. She's awesome and empathetic. She's truly a giant in the field of volunteerism and how a community should be."

Coming to Texas from Los Angeles in the early '90s, Clark

'She exemplifies the qualities I would want in my own physician. She is clinically competent, compassionate, conscientious, and has a desire to keep learning. Her patients love her.'

**Dr. David Buck,
Healthcare for the
Homeless in Houston**

40, was pursuing her medical career in a friendlier, less crowded city. Dreaming of medicine since the age of 9, Clark studied at Antioch College and Drew/UCLA Medical Education Program.

Choosing to be challenged professionally, Clark began her duties with MacGregor Medical Association in 1993, then at Baylor College of Medicine and staff physician with the Harris County Hospital District in 2000, and finally joining up with HHH in 2001.

Her work with the homeless and students mingle intermittently as Clark teaches while she treats her patients. Going between both fields is rewarding for Clark and reflects in her work.

Director and founder of HHH, Dr. David Buck, feels blessed to have her at his clinic.

"She exemplifies the qualities I would want in my own physician. She is clinically competent, compassionate, conscientious, and has a desire to keep learning. Her patients love her," he said.

As a single mother of three children, Alicia, 11, Joshua, 8, and Heidi, 7, this Kingwood resident finds joy in her daily routine.

"My homeless patients are grateful for each and every small thing you do. They always



Kim Christiansen photo

Dr. Dana Clark works at the Northwest Community Health Center to help the area's homeless with medical issues.

express their gratitude.

"Working with the homeless helps me understand people and put life in perspective in terms of human endurance in the face of hardship," Clark said.

And in teaching, Clark relishes her students' quest for knowledge.

"It's rewarding when students appreciate what you have taught them. It's also important to help develop better physicians and improve healthcare.

"By improving something in a learning physician, you can

help many patients down the line," she said.

As a volunteer, Clark's duties are hard to nail down. Whether it's going on an outreach call to treat homeless on the streets, conducting fund-raisers, or mentoring a student, it's part of her job.

"I love working with the homeless the most. Providing direct patient care and learning about life at all stages in different situations is all about helping others who really need help," Clark said.