

## AN INTERVIEW WITH LEE MICHELSON, OUTGOING CEO OF SEQUOIA HEALTHCARE DISTRICT

*Q: What changes have you seen at SHD over your tenure?*

First and foremost, the **Healthy Schools Initiative (HSI) was created**. We wanted to influence health as it relates to children. Pamela Kurtzman was tasked with developing the HSI program. **HSI has become our largest program with \$4 million in funds**, representing about 1/3 of our overall budget. The program **impacts 28,000 children** and touches on a wide variety of issues, including mental health, PE, and school nursing.

We also are a leader in addressing the needs of the older adult community. The fastest growing segment of our population is those over 80. We increased the amount of funds spent on them from 10% to 25% of our \$12 million total budget.

I am proud of our medical, dental, and mental health clinical services for the low income and uninsured. We support anyone living in our area, regardless of immigration status.

*Q: What do you want to say to the parents of the school districts?*

**Pay attention to your kids.** I don't think it is easy being a kid these days. There is a lot of stress, mental health issues, etc. **There are many ways to define success.** We all want our kids to succeed. We need to broaden our definition. **Every kid should be involved in something they are passionate about. I am concerned about the "keeping up with the Joneses" mentality** that is prevalent here in Silicon Valley. **My wish is for happy, confident children who have a positive sense of self-worth.**

*Q: What hopes do you have for SHD in the future?*

First, I am so excited to see Pamela take over as CEO. The District has the opportunity to play a role in sparking innovation in health care. Technology has allowed us to make significant changes in how we do health care, including tele-medicine and health apps. People will continue to take even more control of their own health care.

As an example, we have just started a pilot program for older adults who have not seen a dentist in many years. They are Meals-on-Wheels customers who are home-bound. Through the use of portable x-ray machines, oral health care is provided in the home, with the results sent immediately to a dentist.

What helps create the space for opportunity is the freedom we have to define our programs. We don't have strict mandates on what we have to do with our money.

*Q: On a more personal side, what is your favorite book?*

[St. Francis](#) by Nikos Kazantzakis. It is a beautifully written book about this truly remarkable human being.

**By Stacey Holmes**