



Inspiring the Next Generation of Researchers

What better way to demonstrate the challenges and excitement of a career in science to young students than to bring a traveling laboratory to their school? In such a laboratory, outfitted with the latest biotechnology equipment, students gain skills and engage their imaginations as they puzzle through the mysteries of disease, learn about their bodies, and perhaps set a course for their future careers.

As described on page 4 of this magazine, mobile labs grew out of NCRR's Science Education Partnership Awards (SEPA) program. Since the first mobile lab was launched in 1998 in Boston, 11 similar vehicles have set forth across the country.

This is just one example of SEPA's innovative and colorful activities, aimed at exciting students to pursue research careers. Now in its 16th year, SEPA is active in more than 30 states, Puerto Rico, and five Native American communities, reaching tens of thousands each year.

Lively museum exhibits that explain front-page topics such as genetics and stem cell research, documentaries created by inner-city students that explain how HIV/AIDS spreads, and hands-on activities in classrooms are just a few examples of the activities sponsored by SEPA. I encourage you to read about the latest SEPA awardees, announced on November 13, and their ambitious plans at <http://www.ncrrsepa.org>.

In addition to inspiring the next generation of researchers, SEPA projects provide communities with a better understanding of health and medical research. Such knowledge will help them make better lifestyle and health decisions.

As the examples on page 3 illustrate, SEPA grantees often collaborate with Clinical and Translational Science Award recipients, taking advantage of their investigators and resources. This is one of the many instances in which NCRR programs work together to leverage resources and maximize outreach.

Although expressed in different forms, all of our programs, at NCRR and throughout NIH, share the same goal: to improve the nation's health through biomedical research.

Barbara Alving, M.D.

Barbara Alving, M.D.
Director, NCRR

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