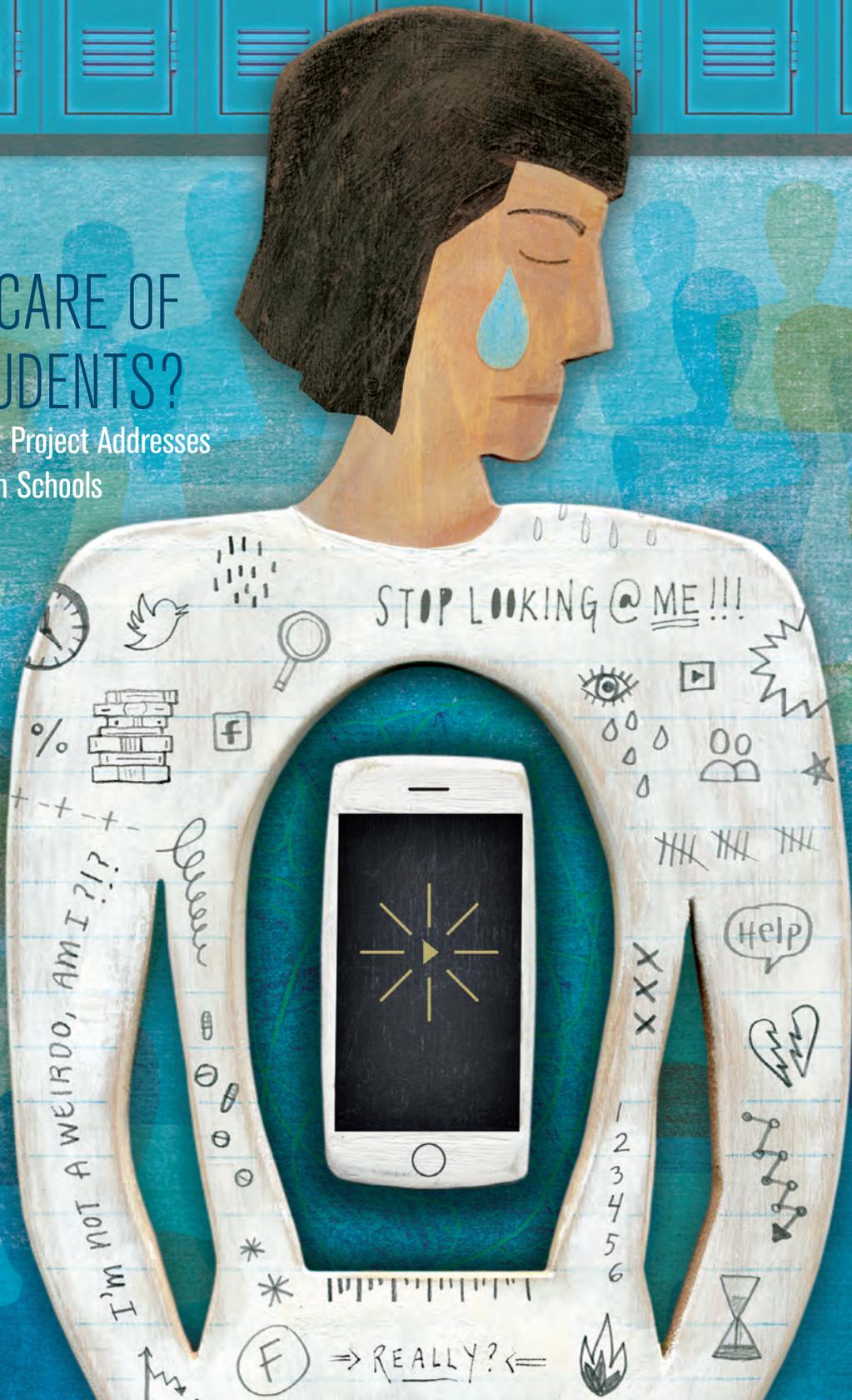


PULSE

A PUBLICATION for ALUMNI & FRIENDS of TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER WINTER 2019

ARE WE TAKING CARE OF OUR STUDENTS?

TTUHSC TWITR Project Addresses
Mental Health in Schools



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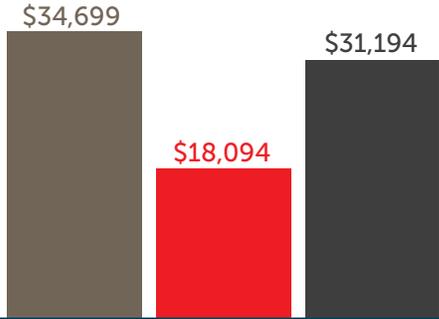
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NEXT ISSUE:

TTUHSC and School of Medicine
celebrate 50 years!

A look inside the new buildings on
campus in Lubbock and Permian Basin.

TTUHSC Most Affordable Medical School



TTUHSC ranked No. 1 and No. 2 on the U.S. News and World Report's top 10 list of affordable public medical schools for in-state and out-of-state students based on the 2017-2018 school year.

In-state students paid **\$18,094** per year to attend TTUHSC.

Out-of-state students paid **\$31,194** per year to attend TTUHSC.

Public medical schools charged students an average of **\$34,699** per year for in-state tuition and fees.



We're excited to announce TTUHSC El Paso will launch its very own alumni and friends magazine in Spring 2019! We've enjoyed this amazing opportunity with PULSE and will miss collaborating with our friends at TTUHSC.

Keep in touch and sign up to receive the first-ever TTUHSC El Paso alumni and friends magazine!

To subscribe, send your contact information to news.ep@ttuhsc.edu.



TTUHSC EL PASO

Texas Tech University
Health Sciences Center El Paso





 @TeddLMitchell
  @TTUHSCPresident

TTUHSC — 50 YEARS LOOKS GOOD ON YOU

May 27, 1969, was a game changer for health education and patient care in West Texas. Legislation signed that day by Gov. Preston Smith established an independent university with the sole purpose of training health care professionals and providing world-class health care for the region.

Since then, TTUHSC has grown from one school on one campus to a highly complex health sciences center that provides the best educational opportunities in the nation for a multitude of health care disciplines. Additionally, we are extremely fortunate to have incredible clinical opportunities in each of our campus communities where our students learn from the best of the best in their fields.

None of this would have been possible without each one of you — our faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends.

Our faculty are experts in their fields. They lead in policy change, deliver quality health care at home and abroad, and improve care worldwide through novel research.

We have more than 28,000 alumni who are TTUHSC ambassadors around the world, many who also are experts and leaders in their respective disciplines. Each year, we are grateful to add to that number from our 5,000-member student body. We get the best of the best in every program, and throughout their academic careers our students consistently earn accolades and strengthen our reputation.

Finally, we have thousands of the most generous donors—many of whom have a longstanding commitment to this university's success. Your generosity has provided more study time and lessened debt burdens for our students. Your support has enabled junior faculty to develop baseline research that then translated into federal funding. Your care and concern for your neighbors has allowed us to establish outreach programs to serve critical health care needs.

For 50 years, TTUHSC has been quietly transforming into a leader in health-related higher education – in our clinics, classrooms and labs. When I came to Lubbock nine years ago, it was this quiet determination and selfless integrity I witnessed both within the university and throughout West Texas that I found so endearing. Thank you for allowing me to add to this incredible history.

TTUHSC has accomplished so much, but in reality, we're just getting started.

Tedd L. Mitchell, MD
 Texas Tech University System Chancellor
 Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center President



Help us celebrate 50 years of our university.

Visit fifty.ttuhscc.edu for events and to share your story of experiences with TTUHSC and be sure to follow the university's social media channels — Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

PULSE

WINTER 2019 • VOLUME 29, NUMBER 1

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

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A DESIRE TO SERVE

One of the most rewarding things about being a part of TTUHSC El Paso has been watching our health sciences center community bond through shared values of compassion and service to others.

We're a young institution, established as a TTU System component in 2013. But as our campus grows each year, I am pleased to see all these individuals—newcomers and “old-timers” from our days as a regional TTUHSC campus—naturally embrace the true purpose of our existence: we are here to help others.

I've been proud to witness, on and off campus, countless examples of TTUHSC El Paso giving back to the community. These include our Medical Student Run Clinic, where students and faculty volunteer to provide free health care for the Sparks community in far east El Paso County; the Rotary Club of El Paso's Lower Valley RotaCare Clinic, where our students and faculty have volunteered for the past five years; the El Paso Baptist Clinic, where we care for residents of the Segundo Barrio, one of the city's oldest neighborhoods; and the *Salud Sin Fronteras* (Health Without Borders) clinic, where our students gain hands-on experience providing free care to migrant farm workers.

In addition to the year-round clinic activities, our students set aside time for special outreach projects such as the Student Government Association's annual *Corazón de Oro* (Heart of Gold) event. For *Corazón de Oro*, our students spend a Saturday volunteering at a variety of sites, from domestic violence shelters to food banks. A similar effort happens each year around the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in January, when students honor King's legacy by spending a weekend lending a helping hand to various organizations. Projects include providing health screenings at homeless shelters, organizing donations for a veterans' support group and reading stories to children at a library in an underserved community.

Lessons learned from these events are shared each year in our Annual Service Learning Symposium, a component of the Society, Community and the Individual (SCI) course required of all first-year medical students.

It's wonderful to see the immediate benefits generated by this spirit of philanthropy. But there are other positive outcomes that resonate for years. Our students come to better understand where help is needed in the community; they hone medical-Spanish skills that will help throughout their careers; and they build lasting relationships with leaders from a wide range of community-service organizations.

We all know the daunting workload students in health care fields face as they pursue their higher education dreams. I commend them, as well as our hard-working faculty and staff, for finding the time to care for others in need. As we enter our health science center's sixth year of existence, I look forward to seeing many more exemplars of community engagement.

Richard Lange, MD, MBA
TTUHSC El Paso President



TOMMIE MORELOS

 @TTUHSCEP  @PresidentLange

We will soon launch our own publication for alumni and supporters of our health sciences center, fittingly named “TTUHSC El Paso Alumni & Friends” magazine. Our first issue will reach mailboxes in April.

I want to thank TTUHSC's *PULSE* magazine for the great partnership and support they have given us in sharing news about TTUHSC El Paso these past few years. We truly appreciate everything you have done for us.

PULSE EDITORIAL

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Visit ttuhsc.edu/alumni/pulse

A DIFFERENT KIND

of Story Time

The School of Health Professions Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences created the “Wee Read” program, which received a grant from The CH Foundation for 2018, to provide interactive story time for young children. The program is a free community resource open to the public, which highlights a speech and language strategy each week, setting it apart from other story time offerings in Lubbock.

“The idea for this program came a few years ago when my children were 18 months and 3 years old,” said Melissa Whitaker, MS, CCC-SLP, (Health Professions ’04, ’02) clinical instructor in the department and co-director of Wee Read. “There were a lot of story times offered in town for families, but they were more conducive to elementary-aged children. Toddlers are not as apt to sit and listen as a book is read, so we developed this program for a younger age range.”

Whitaker coordinates the program with fellow clinical instructor, Brittany Hall, MS, CCC-SLP, (Health Professions ’05, ’03). Second-year graduate students in the Speech-Language Pathology program conduct the Wee Read sessions, which occur every Thursday at 10 a.m. in the TTUHSC Speech-Language Clinic. The students receive clinical hours for serving in this capacity and obtain a valuable foundation for future work upon graduation.

“Our graduate students haven’t had as much opportunity in the past counseling and coaching parents with young children,” Hall said. “This is a unique opportunity for our students to work with this specific placement, which is beneficial given the variety of career options in speech and language therapy for children 3 years old and younger.”

The graduate students create interactive reading sessions for children that involve using the whole body. The books are movement-based with literacy-based extension activities — such as singing and acting out words — following each reading.

“It’s (Wee Read program) great for the parents, and it’s a great learning experience for our students as well,” Hall said. “Sometimes our students think that it will be an easy way to get clinical hours, (and) then they walk in and have a question from a parent that requires them to apply what they’ve learned in the classroom. Not only do they have to apply what they’ve learned, but they have to communicate that knowledge in a parent-friendly way. While this may be challenging for them at times, it’s helping them build a solid foundation for their future speech-language pathology careers.”



This Wee Read session featured the book “If You Decide to Go to the Moon,” by Faith McNulty. The graduate students made rocket ships for the children to hold while the book was read.

Who Said It?

TTUHSC
weighs in on
recent achievements.

"I am very excited about going to Vietnam to help health care professionals improve their knowledge and skills about speech-language assessment and intervention for children with speech and language impairments." Sue Ann Lee, PhD, CCC-SLP, associate professor, School of Health Professions Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences, received a six-month Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program Grant to Hue, Vietnam.



"At times, balancing my responsibilities and being a student regent can be daunting and has required resilience and perseverance. Between my duties as a medical student, researcher, member of the Junior League and the Texas Medical Association, creating solutions and planning ahead help me balance my responsibilities." Jane Gilmore on life as a TTUHSC medical student and student regent for the Texas Tech University System.



"I've been developing my career within the School of Medicine since I was a post-doctoral student. Now as a full professor for the last four years, I have ambitions of giving back to the school as a leader. I am very excited and ready for this opportunity to learn how to be a great leader and do more for the School of Medicine and the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center as a whole." Leslie Shen, PhD, professor, School of Medicine Department of Pathology, was accepted into the Drexel Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine program. The program is for senior female faculty at the associate or full professor level who demonstrate the greatest potential for assuming executive leadership positions within the next five years at academic health centers.



"Helping employers understand and see the value of hiring individuals with disabilities at their employment sites and sharing my knowledge with other professionals across the country made it a very rewarding experience for me." Rebecca Sametz, PhD, CRC, program director and assistant professor, School of Health Professions Master of Science Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling Program, elected as the 2017-2018 president of the National Rehabilitation Association Job Placement and Development Division.



"To lead the Department of Internal Medicine at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center as chairman is a great honor. I am excited to contribute to developing compassionate well-trained physicians that can provide superior medical care not only to the community but also to the West Texas region. In addition to education, we will also continue to develop and promote our clinical and basic science research." Santhosh K.G. Koshy, MD, MBA, chair and professor, J.T. and Margaret Talkington Department of Internal Medicine. He also holds the Arnett Endowed Chair in Internal Medicine and the Margaret Talkington Endowed Chair in Internal Medicine.



GRANT-ed!

Congratulations to these TTUHSC faculty members who received extramural funding from June through December 2018.

Sanjay Awasthi, MD, received a three-year \$1.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Defense for his work in **breast cancer research**.

Susan Bergenson, PhD, with **Ted Reid, PhD**, received a five-year \$1.6 million grant from the National Institutes of Health National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism for their work in **alcohol use disorders**.

Ion Bobulescu, MD, received a three-year \$1.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases for his research in **kidney disease**.



Luis Cuello, PhD, received a four-year renewal grant of \$1.2 million from the National Institutes of Health for his work with **potassium channels**.

Devin Lowe, PhD, received a three-year \$542,982 U.S. Department of Defense grant for his **colon cancer study**.

Josée Guindon, PhD, received a five-year \$1.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health National Institute on Drug Abuse for her work with the **endocannabinoid system**.

Vardan T. Karamyan, PhD, along with **Thomas Abbruscato, PhD**, and **Paul Trippier, PhD**, received a five-year \$2.9 million multiple-principal-investigator R01 grant from the National Institutes of Health National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke for their research in **stroke therapy**.

Patrick Reynolds, MD, PhD, and **Min Kang, PharmD**, received a five-year \$2 million grant and a three-year \$1.6 million grant from the National Institutes of Health National Cancer Institute for studies on **neuroblastomas**. Reynolds received a separate five-year \$1.7 million grant from the National Institutes of Health National Cancer Institute for an additional **neuroblastoma study**.

Hongjun Liang, PhD, received a two-year \$200,000 grant from the Cancer Prevention Research Institute of Texas for research involving **anticancer drugs**.



For more information on each grant, visit the Pulse website: ttuhsc.edu/alumni/pulse

5 minutes with the faculty...

Q&A WITH COURTNEY QUEEN, PHD | By Kara Bishop



Courtney Queen, PhD, is an assistant professor for the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Julia Jones Matthews Department of Public Health.

WHAT INTERESTED YOU IN PUBLIC HEALTH? My background is in social sciences focusing on medical sociology, so public health was a good fit for me because I can combine social and behavioral sciences with practical application in the community. Public health allows you to work in multiple disciplines

and in a collaborative way that I appreciate and enjoy.

ARE YOU CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN ANY COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS? I worked to develop a technology for early diagnosis of the Buruli ulcer, which is a neglected tropical disease (named for Buruli County in Uganda because of the many cases diagnosed there in the 1960s). Taking the device, technology, algorithms and our ability to diagnose “into the community,” required a collaborative team. I was awarded a National Science Foundation I-Corps grant in 2018 — \$50,000 proof-of-concept funding — to evaluate our customer base and determine how to most effectively move our research and technology from bench to bedside. It forced me as a scientist to really step out of my comfort zone because it’s a whole new way of thinking. It can be scary to switch modalities — from scientist to entrepreneur — but it’s also highly satisfying to know you’re one step closer to improving a person’s reality who may be suffering from this disease.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A MASTER’S OF PUBLIC HEALTH DEGREE? The value of the degree can be seen in a number of areas. The communities in which our graduates work benefit from the increase of educated individuals working with public health departments to provide essential services such as the development of community-based health promotion programs; improvement of legislation that supports health and wellness at the population level; and even the private sector working to improve occupational health and safety.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE LOOK LIKE TO YOU? I think the technology in health care like telemedicine and all the interventions that are happening now point toward a bright future. I read this interesting piece on the values-based model of health care that says eventually the pricing structure for health care will change, leading to more incentives and values-based outcomes established by prevention and public health initiatives as well as early detection and diagnosis. All of these components are going to transform the current health care structure, which is exciting. It’s a great time to be involved in public health.

“We were excited when the Department of Public Health became an accredited program last summer by the Council on Education for Public Health.”

— COURTNEY QUEEN, PHD

The
School of Health Professions
celebrates 35 years.

THEN NOW

School is approved by Texas Legislature in **1981**.

First class of **18** students admitted in **1983**.

One campus and **three** degree programs.

Twenty different degree programs on **three** campuses — most diverse school at TTUHSC and one of the largest in the nation.

7,237 graduates to date.

Licensure first-time pass rate for all programs is **96** percent.



School of Health Professions ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP

The School of Health Professions has been awarded its first endowed professorship. The **CH** Foundation Endowed Professorship in Pain Science will be held by Associate Dean for Research Phil Sizer, PhD, PT. This appointment provides much-needed leadership for the advancement of pain-related education, research and scholarship. The endowed professorship will support supervisory faculty members in leading education initiatives, recruiting and retaining students, developing faculty members in research, and leading administrative initiatives that promote pain science.

MATTERS

of the heart

BY SUZANNA CISNEROS

Barber Shops and Blood Pressure Checks

On any given day you can find PJ and his barbers behind their chairs cutting their customers' hair. Long-time loyal customers now bring their sons to get a cut from their favorite barber. The relationship between a barber and the customer is almost like family — with conversations about work, school and life common topics.

TTUHSC medical students have worked with barbershop and beauty salon owners for 10 years to tackle a silent killer — high blood pressure. The Barber Shop Blood Pressure Group allows customers to do one-stop shopping when it comes to their grooming and health needs by providing blood pressure and BMI screenings as they wait on their barber or beautician.

Students work to promote awareness about high blood pressure issues and provide health information to prevent or improve related conditions. E.L. Domingo-Johnson's father died of heart failure at an early age. Now as a second-year medical student and president of the Barber Shop Blood Pressure Group, he sees the importance and need for a project like this for communities.

"My family is an example of who we are trying to reach," Domingo-Johnson said. "My father was African-American, and as a kid I went with him to get haircuts at the barber regularly. I was at a barber shop way more often than I was at a doctor's office, which makes programs like this so important because we are finding people who may have not received the care they needed."

The medical students respect the relationship customers have with their barber or beautician, who can give the customer a nudge to get their blood pressure checked while they wait. It takes no time out of their day to learn if they are at risk so they can seek appropriate health care.

The Barber Shop Blood Pressure Group was created in 2008 by two TTUHSC School of Medicine students Kweku Hazel, MD, (Medicine '12) and Soheil Daftarian, MD, (Resident '16, Medicine '12).

"Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine derives great support from its community and looks for ways to give back to the people of West Texas," said Steven L. Berk, MD, TTUHSC executive vice president,

provost and School of Medicine dean. "It has been a successful project for these 10 years because medical students truly care about their community and are willing to volunteer their time despite very busy schedules."

Berk said medical students work with barbers and hairdressers to educate patrons about high blood pressure, teach barbers to measure blood pressure and take blood pressures of patrons, particularly those who do not have a doctor. First- and second-year medical students work with the School of Medicine dean's office volunteering weekly to visit more than a dozen barber and beauty shops on Saturday mornings.

"We help bridge a gap between the community and access to health care," said Stacy Philip, a second-year medical student and Barber Shop Blood Pressure Group leadership team member. "Not only do we conduct blood pressure health checks, but we also provide education on how to integrate healthy food options into clients' diets, tips about exercise, incorporating preventive measures into their health maintenance, and ways to access health services."

Barbers, beauticians and their clients have had a positive response to the project.

"At first there is hesitation from the clients, but when they see others getting checked they are receptive to it," said Bella Kalayilparampil, a second-year medical student. "One dad who was there said he worked out but his blood pressure was high. He had a family history of hypertension and did not know that was a factor. This project is a lot about education. Now the dad is very open to the blood pressure checks."

Domingo-Johnson said having a medical school back such a project has an impact on all generations.

"At my barber shop, I help more of an older-generation clientele," Domingo-Johnson said. "They are not as excited the first time around. I worked with a gentleman who knew he had high blood pressure, but he didn't like the effects of his medicine. I talked to him about visiting his physician and relaying that information to him to have the medications switched. We also help them better understand how to ask questions and talk to their doctors."



KAMI HUNT

TTUHSC **TURNS 50** THIS SUMMER!

MAY 1969

The 61st Texas Legislature passes HB498 creating the Texas Tech University School of Medicine. Gov. Preston Smith signs the bill into law.

DECEMBER 1985

Official student enrollment is announced as **401** medical students, **314** resident physicians, **190** nursing students and **77** allied health students.

DECEMBER 1994

Board of Regents approves construction of new TTUHSC library in Lubbock.

SEPTEMBER 2008

TTUHSC announces creation of the SimLife Center that will offer interdisciplinary clinical simulation in Lubbock to students of all schools.

FEBRUARY 2018

First vaccine license agreement for TTUHSC is signed.

1 9 6 9 • 2 0 1 9

To learn more about TTUHSC's 50-year anniversary, visit: fifty.ttuhs.edu

ADOPT A SCHOOL PROGRAM

Promotes Health and Wellness FOR EL PASO YOUTH



Health care is improving for some El Paso children thanks to a pilot “Adopt a School” program that pairs physicians from the El Paso Pediatric Society with two schools in the Lower Valley neighborhood.

Adopt a School is led by Gilbert Handal, MD, a professor in the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine Department of Pediatrics. A number of pediatricians in the El Paso Pediatric Society volunteer their time, making weekly visits to Ysleta and Capistrano elementary schools in the Ysleta Independent School District (ISD).

Coordinating with the schools’ nurses, the physicians provide a number of basic medical services for the students, many of whom aren’t covered by health insurance. The services include health screenings, sports physicals, immunizations, and health and nutrition education for the students and their families. The services are provided at no cost, Handal said. Additionally, members of the Adopt a School team assist parents with enrolling their children in available health insurance programs.

“We’re excited about the opportunity to improve access to health care for the residents of this community,” Handal said. “Ysleta ISD helped us identify schools with a real need for this type of program, and we are very fortunate to have participation from members of the El Paso Pediatric Society.”

Marielle Perez, Ysleta Elementary School nurse, Gilbert Handal, MD, professor in the TTUHSC El Paso Paul L. Foster School of Medicine Department of Pediatrics, and Griselda Ibarra, RN, with the Adopt a School program.



DECONTAMINATION EXERCISE PREPARES RESIDENTS FOR RADIATION INCIDENT

A quiet July morning learning about radiology at University Medical Center of El Paso (UMC) turned into a crash course in decontamination for 22 emergency medicine and radiology residents. UMC personnel also took part in the practice drill, which included erecting a giant mass casualty decontamination shower.

Students from REL Washington Elementary School portrayed victims of a fictional explosion and fire at a hazardous waste facility. Emergency medicine and radiology residents checked the “patients” with Geiger counters for radiation contamination while also triaging the patients for their injuries, noted on cards around their necks. Only the instructors knew that four of the patients were “contaminated.”

Michael Tate said he was happy to have his three children participate in the exercise because of the role TTUHSC El Paso students and residents have played in his life.

“I used to be here (at UMC) a lot when I was sick with lupus,” Tate said. “I just like how the students actually talk to you as a person. Another reason (we participated) was so they can see what the doctors do, and maybe they’ll want to be a doctor when they’re older.”

For Emily Wagner, MD, a first-year resident, the hands-on experience dealing with a radiation incident was a first.

“This isn’t something that happens frequently, but we have to know how to do it,” said Wagner. “I’ve never assessed somebody for radiation or anything like that, so being able to run through it now for when I have real patients who are sick and need my help is awesome.”



Emergency medicine and radiology residents conduct a mock test for radiation exposure using a Geiger counter.

Lange to Chair FDA Advisory Board

TTUHSC El Paso President Richard Lange, MD, MBA, has been appointed as panel chair for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration Circulatory Systems Devices Panel.

The panel reviews and evaluates data about the safety and effectiveness of marketed and investigational medical devices for use in the circulatory and vascular systems. They then make appropriate recommendations to the FDA commissioner.

Lange, also dean of the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine, is a practicing cardiologist and has served on the FDA Circulatory Systems Devices Panel since 2010. His four-year term as chair comes at a time when the FDA is going through important changes, including efforts to move drugs and devices through the approval process faster.

"I look forward to working with the FDA to accomplish those goals, to bring these devices to the public earlier and as quickly as possible, while still ensuring their safety."



"Hispanic-Serving Institution" Status Opens Doors to New Grant Funding

The U.S. Department of Education recognized TTUHSC El Paso as a Title V Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in 2018, opening doors to new sources of federal grant funding.

Here are some quick facts on TTUHSC El Paso's HSI designation:

- ▶ To qualify, an institution's undergraduate student enrollment must be at least 25 percent Hispanic. As of 2018, 66 percent of TTUHSC El Paso's undergraduate students, and 45 percent of its overall student body, identified as Hispanic on their applications.
- ▶ TTUHSC El Paso is the third institution in the TTU System to receive HSI status (after Texas Tech University and Angelo State University) and one of two health sciences centers in the nation with HSI status.
- ▶ The Department of Education has established grant programs available to HSIs. These include programs that enhance academic offerings, support institutional stability, make advanced degrees more accessible to Hispanic communities, and increase Hispanic representation in STEM fields.
- ▶ TTUHSC El Paso is eligible for a federal grant-match waiver.



Learn more at <https://bit.ly/2MFwZtJ>.

EMR CLASSES TURN *Local High School* s into *Heroes*



In May 2018, nine Mountain View High School students graduated from the school's inaugural emergency medicine responder (EMR) course, earning them state and national first-responder certifications. The course is offered through an affiliation agreement between the TTUHSC El Paso Department of Emergency Medicine Simulation Education Division and the Clint Independent School District.

More than 150 hours of emergency responder training came down to a few crucial seconds for two Mountain View High School students this year.

Valeria Arrellanes, 17, was at a pool party when a 7-year-old boy was pulled from the water without a pulse. Party attendees began to panic as the child's condition was assessed, so Arrellanes stepped up to administer CPR, which she had learned through a TTUHSC El Paso program offered at her high school. Thanks to her quick reaction, the child survived.

Likewise, Aaron Higareda, 18, was working at a restaurant when he saw a co-worker choking on food. He performed the Heimlich maneuver to clear the obstruction from the airway, allowing his co-worker to breathe normally.

Both teens were part of a group of nine Mountain View High School students who completed the school's first emergency medical responder course in May 2018 that earned them state and national first-responder certifications.

The course is offered through an affiliation agreement between the TTUHSC El Paso Department of Emergency Medicine Simulation (EMS) Education Division and the Clint Independent School District. EMS educators with TTUHSC El Paso's simulation division taught the course as part of the Health Professions Academy at Mountain View High School. The four classes, 10 students per class, to be offered next academic year already has a wait list.

"The goal is to introduce them to emergency medical services," said Brian Wilson, a Department of Emergency Medicine faculty associate who coordinated the class at Mountain View. "With this (state and national) certification, they can join their volunteer EMS and fire services and become active members as first responders."

JUST *the facts*



606 El Pasoans attended
TTUHSC El Paso's 2018 Red Raider
Reels summer movie series.

More than
60 percent

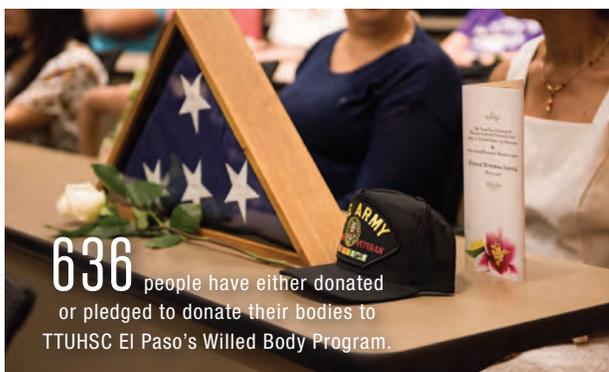
of the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine
2018 incoming class signed up for
TTUHSC El Paso's Student Philanthropy
Program. The program invites students to give
back through a one-time donation based on
their class year, e.g., \$20.22 for the class
of 2022. All donations go exclusively toward
student success initiatives at TTUHSC El Paso.

108 high school students participated
in TTUHSC El Paso's summer medical camps.
The two-week camps give local high schoolers
a glimpse of the medical professions through
presentations by health care professionals, hospital
tours, a mock crime scene investigation, financial
aid information and simulation exercises.



68 million

total steps were tallied by TTUHSC El Paso
employees participating in the 2018 Walk
the Walk challenge. The month-long team
walking competition encourages employees to
incorporate physical activity into their workday.



636 people have either donated
or pledged to donate their bodies to
TTUHSC El Paso's Willied Body Program.

DODGING DISEASE

TTUHSC El Paso researchers investigate potential blood test for early detection of Type 2 diabetes

BY LEONARD MARTINEZ | PHOTO BY TOMMIE MORELOS

For weeks, Arturo Hernandez battled chapped lips and an unquenchable thirst, despite constantly drinking water. He began to use the restroom every hour. As time went on, he made the trip every 15 minutes.

“It wasn’t until my family visited my sister-in-law, who is living with diabetes, that I discovered something was wrong,” said Hernandez, a resident of El Paso, Texas. After he made several trips to the bathroom, his sister-in-law grew suspicious and tested his glucose level.

“I (put) my glucose level (into a search engine), and the results basically advised me to immediately go to the hospital,” Hernandez recalled. “I went to the doctor the next day for tests. Two days later, I was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes.”

At age 44, Hernandez had to radically change his lifestyle and take medication to control this complicated and life-threatening disease.

As has happened to others diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, Hernandez discovered the hard way that something was wrong — through telltale symptoms such as frequent urination and dehydration.

Obviously, time is of the essence when it comes to diagnosing and managing Type 2 diabetes. Unfortunately, current screening methods using glucose levels only identify people who already have or are on the verge of developing the disease.

At TTUHSC El Paso, researchers are investigating a potential breakthrough in Type 2 diabetes diagnosis: a simple blood test that could indicate a person’s likelihood of developing the disease years before symptoms appear.

Biomarker Discovery

A team led by David P. Cistola, MD, PhD, professor in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and director of the TTUHSC El Paso Center of Emphasis in Diabetes and Metabolism, has discovered a blood biomarker, known as water T2, that can be used to identify individuals who could be at risk for Type 2 diabetes and prediabetes. The discovery could revolutionize the disease screening process, giving patients an opportunity to make lifestyle modifications or initiate therapies to prevent Type 2 diabetes altogether.

Both Type 2 diabetes and prediabetes conditions are associated with a decline in the pancreas’ capacity to secrete insulin. However, water T2 is extremely sensitive to changes in metabolic health, and can be used to detect

DIABETES IMPACT



Worldwide, 400 million people have been diagnosed with diabetes, including 14 percent of U.S. adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A generation from now, there will be 600 million people worldwide with diabetes.



As of 2017, it costs \$1.3 trillion to care for people with diabetes, and the bill is expected to increase in the coming years.

an early stage of disease risk where pancreatic insulin secretion is adequate and glucose levels are normal, Cistola said.

His research discovered low measurement of water T2 in blood as an indicator of early metabolic abnormalities such as insulin resistance, elevated lipids and subclinical inflammation. A low T2 measurement can raise a red flag to doctors long before a clinical diagnosis of prediabetes or diabetes. Like a general blood glucose test, a water T2 test requires only a small drop of blood from a finger prick.

Cistola said the potential of the water T2 test can be compared to cancer screening, where the goal is to identify individuals in stage 1 of the disease, rather than stages 2 or 3 after the cancer has spread. The first stage in the progression toward Type 2 diabetes is characterized by insulin resistance and chronic inflammation, as well as barely sufficient insulin secretion. If not corrected, these processes will progress and gradually destroy insulin-producing cells, causing other abnormalities throughout the body ending with a manifestation of diabetic complications.

“I remember the day we made the initial discovery,” Cistola said. “At that point, we’d studied only about 10 patients, and even then, the correlation between water T2 and markers of insulin resistance popped right out.”

Cistola knew he was on to something. “I remember literally taking the results and running down the stairway and talking with (colleagues) about how to develop this technology,” he said.

David P. Cistola, MD, PhD, director of the TTUHSC El Paso Center of Emphasis in Diabetes and Metabolism, has discovered a biomarker that could help detect a condition that precedes Type 2 diabetes early enough to prevent the disease from taking hold. The biomarker, water T2, can be measured in just a few minutes using a small blood sample from a finger stick.



Blood Test Validation

In 2018, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) awarded Cistola a two-year, \$229,500 grant to validate and expand upon his initial findings, which were published Dec. 19, 2017, in the online *Journal of Translational Medicine* (volume 15, article 258). The grant will support the validation of water T2 as a biomarker using blood samples preserved from the NIH Premier study, a trial of lifestyle interventions and their effect on blood pressure that the agency conducted in the late 1990s.

Cistola's initial water T2 study involved 72 participants. His NIH-funded study expanded the participant size to 810 people, analyzing 4,860 individual blood samples from the Premier study. The NIH recruited people to the Premier study with mild to moderately elevated blood pressure and randomly assigned them to three different treatments — diet, physical activity or lifestyle coaching — to see which lowered blood pressure. Pharmaceuticals were not used.

The Premier study blood samples are useful to Cistola's team because many of the participants — in addition to having blood pressure issues — were in poor metabolic health. This presents the researchers an opportunity to analyze the effects of the lifestyle changes on participants' water T2 measurement.

The water T2 biomarker test hinges on the rate that water molecules tumble in the blood.

"Think of a water molecule as a tiny ball, and that ball can rotate inside the blood," Cistola said. "When the water molecule is by itself, it tumbles very rapidly. But when it hitches a ride with a protein molecule, now it's tumbling with the protein, a much larger ball. The bigger the protein,

the slower the water tumbling and the lower the water T2 value. An individual with poor metabolic health has, on average, larger proteins in the blood, and water T2 can detect that difference.

"It's one thing to use the measurement to screen for people who are in poor metabolic health. But then, as they improve their metabolic health through lifestyle changes, does the measurement actually respond to that? Does the water T2 go back up?"

If the water T2 measurement increases with a reduction in insulin resistance and inflammation, then it will be a very powerful tool for monitoring changes in metabolic health, Cistola added.

The instrument for measuring water T2 is a toaster-sized device that uses technology similar to magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Fifty microliters (the equivalent of one small drop) of blood is drawn into a vial and placed directly into the device without the need for chemical reagents. Within three minutes, a measure of an individual's metabolic health is obtained. If many samples are to be analyzed, a robotic arm can be used to automatically change samples, speeding up the process.

The Significance of an Early Screen

Cistola is hopeful that one day, thanks to this research, patients can be screened for metabolic health using this simple and rapid test during a routine doctor visit.

That kind of screening, offering people an advance warning — perhaps even years before full-blown Type 2 diabetes can develop — would have a great impact, said Hernandez.

"My life would have been so much better without having to take medication," Hernandez said. "If I would have known I was at high risk for diabetes, I might have taken better care of myself in my 30s by exercising more and eating better. I absolutely hate (depending) on medication to make sure my blood sugar levels are fine. It is not fun having to monitor what I eat, but it is necessary." 



DETECT SEPSIS IN FOUR HOURS

If you've ever laid in a hospital bed or kept vigil next to your loved one's bedside waiting on a blood culture to determine if an infection needs treatment, then you know how frustrating the wait can be. When blood cultures can take up to 15 days to reveal bacterial infection, a patient can spend days in a hospital — all while having massive doses of antibiotics pumped into their system just in case. On the other hand, it can be terrifying to realize that the diagnostic process takes longer than the disease progression, rendering treatment useless.

It's no wonder sepsis is the leading cause of death worldwide, even with improved health care outcomes. However, thanks to researchers from TTUHSC and Texas Tech University (TTU), a valuable breakthrough has arrived.

Dimitri Pappas, PhD, an associate professor in the TTU College of Arts and Sciences Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, and graduate student, Ye Zhang, developed a microfluidic chip to detect sepsis at a

much faster rate — decreasing the mortality frequencies caused by late validation of infection. They've since been working with John Griswold, MD, (Resident '86) professor and chair emeritus in the TTUHSC School of Medicine Department of Surgery, to conduct a study using human blood. They published their study, "Multiparameter Affinity Microchip for Early Sepsis Diagnosis Based on CD64 and CD69 Expression and Cell Capture," in the Analytical Chemistry journal in 2018 — volume 90, issue 12.

The microfluidic chip detects sepsis within four hours using only a drop of blood; and only three out of the 12 patients who tested positive for sepsis on the chip showed a positive blood culture within a 72-hour study window. This rapid detection decreases unnecessary antibiotic use and prevents unnecessary hospital stays, providing a revolutionary solution to sepsis diagnosis.

FRUIT FLIES CURE CANCER?

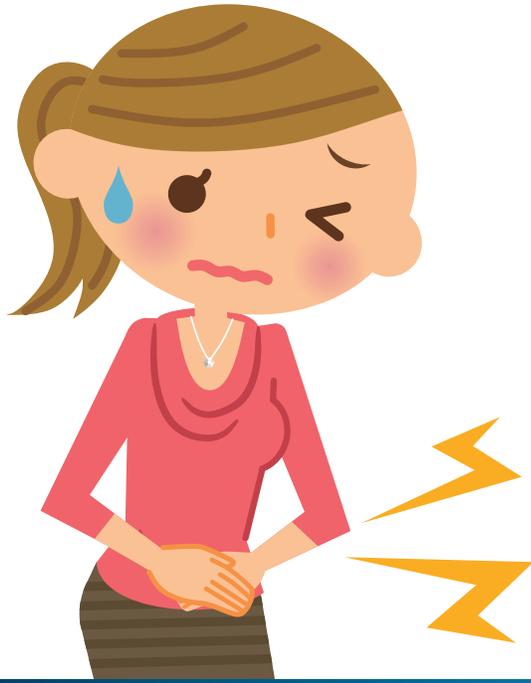
The KRAS protein — often referred to as "undruggable" or treatment resistant once its mutation causes cancer in cells — has been a popular topic in the medical profession for more than 30 years. According to multiple scientific journals, KRAS mutation drives about 90 percent of pancreatic cancers, 45 percent of colorectal cancers and 35 percent of lung cancers. It doesn't stop there. The gene also blocks the effectiveness of EGFR-inhibiting drugs in about 40 percent of cancer patients.

Jeffrey Thomas, PhD, assistant professor in the School of Medicine Department of Cell Biology and Biochemistry is collaborating with TOSK Inc., a biotechnology company specializing in developing Companion drugs. When these drugs are administered alongside certain cancer therapies, they significantly improve patient outcomes, dosing regimens, and cut the cost of treating both cancer and toxic side effects that may occur. They received a two-year \$2 million National Institutes of Health National Cancer Institute SBIR Phase II grant to find a way to halt the progression of cancer caused by KRAS — or reverse it completely — using fruit flies.

"We've taken a somewhat novel approach in our efforts to find a drug to stop or reverse cancer-causing KRAS genes," Thomas said. "We've developed a way of expressing cancer-causing KRAS inside the wings of a fruit fly — we use flies because of their accessibility in helping us understand how (genes) work. This doesn't cause cancer in the fly, but it does cause a severe wing deformity. So, we take this fly and test compounds and chemicals to see what could make the deformed wing return to normal, all without killing or harming the fly."

TOSK plans to submit an investigational new drug application to the Federal Drug Administration to enter human clinical studies within the next 18-24 months.





STUDY BRINGS HOPE FOR PATIENTS WITH UNEXPLAINABLE STOMACH PAIN

Three TTUHSC El Paso faculty members were recognized for an innovative study bringing hope to those who suffer from unexplainable stomach pain.

The report —designed by Jerzy Sarosiek, MD, PhD, and his wife, Irene Sarosiek, MD — was the culmination of years of teamwork. In addition to the Sarosieks, Richard McCallum, MD, was a contributing author of the article.

The study looked at treatments for patients with functional dyspepsia, or patients who are feeling stomach pain with no obvious cause. They checked patients for gastric infection *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*), one of the leading causes of ulcer-like symptoms. The investigators examined the role of patients' own gastric acid secretion in the development of functional dyspepsia symptoms not related to *H. pylori*. To diminish gastric acid secretion and relieve symptoms of dyspepsia, the patients were treated with either the active drug esomeprazole or a placebo in a randomized, double blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial.

"The concept of the whole study was designed and driven by my husband's thinking," said Irene Sarosiek. "(It) started in 2004 at the University of Kansas School of Medicine (and) was very challenging — (recruiting) patients (was difficult). But at the same time, the results that we got from the study were beyond our expectations."

Testing things that could be objectively measured, like stomach acid levels, was an important part in the design of the study. One of the surprising results was some subjects taking a placebo not only reported less pain, but their stomach acid levels went down, too.

"So if a patient believes he or she is getting the drug, somehow the mind is having a measurable impact on gastric acid secretion," Jerzy Sarosiek said.

Among the patients who received a dose of esomeprazole, relief of symptoms was reported in more than 70 percent, compared to 30 percent in the placebo group. In yet another unique aspect of the study, the patients who didn't report relief were then given a second dose.

"With a double dose of esomeprazole, the number of subjects achieving relief increased to above 80 percent," Jerzy Sarosiek said. "A double dose of placebo also increased relief from 30 percent to close to 60 percent. This is the first study showing additive effects of two doses of placebo in relieving symptoms of dyspepsia in patients with stomach problems, which has never been studied before."

The study earned the Sarosieks and McCallum the 2018 Tinsley Harrison Award for the best original manuscript published in *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences* ("Gastric pH and Therapeutic Responses to Esomeprazole in Patients with Functional Dyspepsia: Potential Clinical Implications," December 2016).

FACING THE FIGHT

TUHSC Leads the Charge in Battling Behavioral/Mental Health Issues in West Texas

BY KARA BISHOP

ILLUSTRATIONS BY AMANDA WARREN



She sat in her classroom closet with six students during her conference period. Students she'd found wandering the halls unsure of what to do. They'd never experienced a high-level lockdown before. But, then again, neither had she. Lights out. Doors locked. She knew very little of what was going on, other than administration suspected a student had brought a gun to school. Possibly more than one student. Possibly more than one gun. The doorknob to her classroom rattles, the door opens, "Is anybody in here?" She says nothing and signals the students to be silent.

They hear footsteps walking away, then quickly coming back. "Is there anybody in here? This is the SWAT team."

"We're here, in the closet."

"OK, do not move, we will come back and get you."

The classroom door slams shut.

Ninety minutes later, the SWAT team returns to let them out. She exits first with hands behind her head and is immediately frisked by an officer. One by one the students exit in the same fashion — she was allowed to frisk the girls herself. "Put your hands behind your head and walk in a straight line," is the only communication she gets.

They start walking — she tells me later it felt like marching — in a single-file line, hands behind their heads, surrounded by the SWAT team armed with machine guns. All of a sudden, motion is detected at the end of one of the hallways as they come to an intersection. "Get down!" There's more inaudible shouting as she throws herself on the floor — it was just another police officer. They keep moving. Finally, after what seems like the longest, completely silent seven minutes of her life, she's outside. They get to the tennis courts where a paramedic hooks her up to a nebulizer; she hasn't been able to use her inhaler in three hours. She sits on the tennis court for another three hours before she's cleared to go. She texts me to say she made it home — I remember her routine of praying for safety every morning as she's walking to the school entrance — and I stop and thank God my mom is safe.

THE DILEMMA The lockdown lasted roughly six hours. No one was hurt. No guns were fired. A peaceful ending compared to so many other threats turned gruesome realities at schools in other parts of Texas and across the nation.

School shootings are a constant topic of conversation with parents, teachers, students and politicians all demanding a solution. Following the Santa Fe High School shooting last spring, Gov. Greg Abbott mentioned a program during his press conference that he thought could help divert such a tragedy in the future: the Telemedicine, Wellness, Intervention, Triage and Referral (TWITR) Project developed and operated by the TTUHSC F. Marie Hall Institute of Rural and Community Health.

"May 18, 2018, changed my life," said Billy U. Philips Jr., PhD, MPH, TTUHSC executive vice president of rural health, director of the institute and leader of the TWITR Project. "The shooting at Santa Fe High School turned the TWITR Project from an academic endeavor to something very personal in an instant. Had I not come to TTUHSC, likely as not, my children would have been at that school; 10 years ago, we owned a farm about one mile from the high

school and many of the children in the 4-H group we led in the (Santa Fe) community were there, and one of them did perish (in the incident)."

Five minutes after the governor spoke about TWITR, Philips' phone began to ring. It's been ringing ever since. Reporters, school administrators — more than 100 school districts have reached out to Philips for access to the program to date — public health professionals and politicians all bombarding him with questions about TWITR. Can it really stop school shootings? Can TWITR be offered to my school? Is screening students in the schools a good idea?

Additionally, Philips and his team have responded to four public information requests — extensive in nature — with explicit transparency for government officials who may be trying to spot error or inconsistency.

The people behind TWITR are not looking for shooters. They're not looking to deter school shootings, either, although it could be a byproduct of what they are focused on, which is serving as a behavioral health resource for the needs of students. They're aiming to provide hope to students and parents alike who don't see a way out of their struggles — a resource to those with nowhere else to turn.

They're aiming to provide hope to students and parents alike who don't see a way out of their struggles — a resource to those with nowhere else to turn.

TWITR PROJECT LAUNCHED After the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012, Gov. Rick Perry and Texas Tech University (TTU) System Chancellor Kent Hance decided the state of Texas needed a plan to serve student behavioral health needs.

“Somehow my name came up,” Philips said. “I had worked in telemedicine as an epidemiologist, so they wanted me to put together a preventive care program using this technology. When Dr. (Tedd L.) Mitchell (TTUHSC president and now TTU System chancellor) asked me if we could do this, I said it would take something about like a miracle, but we’re on it. And many miracles have happened since then.”

The primary purpose of the TWITR Project is to screen, assess and provide referral services to students in schools where there are either vacancies in the counselor core, case overloads or a scarcity of mental health referral resources. It’s classified as a secondary prevention program since the process involves screening. When discussing the role TWITR could potentially play in schools, Philips’ team needed to answer whether or not it was even necessary, which they did by facilitating a needs assessment, Philips said. It established a profound need in the area and the project was rolled out in 2014 after six months of development.

The TWITR Project currently operates in 14 school districts within 60 miles driving distance of Lubbock. It’s funded by the Office of the Texas Governor Criminal Justice Division Juvenile Justice Grant Program, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and TTUHSC matching funds. In 2018, the institute received a one-year \$360,885 grant from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, matched by a portion of TTUHSC funds, to begin what has been coined the “Amarillo expansion.” As of press time, five school districts in the Panhandle are participating.

TWITR has three circuit-riding licensed professional counselors (LPCs) handling the project — one just moved to Amarillo full time to be more accessible to the school districts in this area. It’s important for the LPCs to be able to respond quickly to urgent situations and develop relationships with school personnel and students, Philips said.

TWITR BECOMES THE REVOLUTIONARY MODEL The TWITR Project tasked Philips and his team with pioneering a new model of mental health service delivery.

“It’s fair to say this is a revolutionary first-of-its kind model, though mental health screening in schools isn’t new,” Philips said. “Using LPCs was (an innovative) concept. Upon development of the program we discovered they were the least expensive, most appropriately trained and plentiful provider in mental health in West Texas.”

The team looked at LPCs who had good clinical experience, a history with the population age group — TWITR serves ages 12 to 18 — and since the school systems were uncharted territory for the institute, LPCs with experience working in schools was necessary to bridge the gap.

“When I walked into the auditorium, I looked up and saw every single seat filled with every teacher, administrator, bus driver, grounds crew member, coach, guidance counselor and even a few parents from the PTA. They were so glad someone was coming to their school to help make the lives of their (children) better.”

I'M NOT A WEIRDO, AM I?!?

HOW IT WORKS The foundational component of TWITR taught to school personnel is recognition, which is the first step in referring a student. The institute provides recognition training to school personnel in participating school districts once a year.

Philips still remembers the first training meeting he did for Crosbyton Consolidated Independent School District (CISD).

“It stood out for a lot of reasons,” he said. “It was a January day, and I, just coming up from the Gulf Coast, had not dressed for the cold blizzard-like conditions of the day. As I carried my box of 32 folders into the school auditorium for the training, I was hoping I hadn’t brought too many (materials) and was wishing I had an overcoat. When I walked into the auditorium, I looked up and saw every single seat filled with every teacher, administrator, bus driver, grounds crew member, coach, guidance counselor and even a few parents from the PTA. They were so glad someone was coming to their school to help make the lives of their (children) better.”

Recognizing problems existing in and around a child after a traumatic event seems obvious, while noticing beforehand can be more difficult.

“Hindsight is 20/20,” Philips said. “However, proactivity has increased in the schools who work with us. We have gotten more referrals the first six weeks of this school year than we did all last year. Is it because there are more troubled students? No, not necessarily. It’s because teachers and school officials are knowledgeable on what to look for, and everyone is on board with using any tools they have at their disposal to (avoid) tragedy and provide help for our children.”

A referral comes from the counselor, teacher, administrator or sometimes parent, and is based on behavioral issues, a constellation of poor grades, absences, truancy, threats, delinquency and/or involvement with the justice system. Once referred, the assessment portion of the process begins while carefully following protocol.

“We follow school policy on checking in upon arrival, and TWITR protocol requires all students are screened with their parent or guardian present,” said Shawn Marie Parrott, LPC-S, senior mental health professional for TWITR and the LPC assigned to the Amarillo expansion.

During the initial visit, TWITR LPCs can request student records to assist in understanding the student’s academic and social history and to monitor changes in the student’s behavior throughout the school year. Philips said both the student and the parent or guardian sign multiple consent forms in their preferred language

THE DEBATE

Behavioral Health or Mental Health?

Industry professionals have differing opinions on the definitions of behavioral health and mental health, as well as which one should be the predominantly used term. Based on our research, *PULSE* chose the following definitions for this story, with the exception of source quotes:

- ★ **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH:** scientific study of the emotions, behaviors and biology relating to a person’s overall well-being, including mental health.
- ★ **MENTAL HEALTH:** mental illness, which could be impacted by behavioral health.

Do you have an opinion? Join the conversation by emailing Kara Bishop at kara.bishop@ttuhsc.edu. Comments may be shared in our online version.

while participating in the program. While some students may have mental illnesses, most situations involve something changing in the student’s life, which can be overcome without a long-term mental health intervention, Philips said.

The TWITR LPCs care about the student and their family — feeling a strong desire to strengthen the family unit and provide for the child’s needs. Parrott spent seven years working as a counselor for Lubbock County where she focused on counsel and education for the family. She now brings this style to students believing everyone deserves an outlet to tell their story.

“In my experience, the children and parents are willing to be screened with a sense of relief because they feel this is their last resort,” Parrott added.

Once the assessment is complete, the LPC consults with a child and adolescent psychiatrist to develop recommendations for the student based on their



assessment scores. These recommendations are then sent back to the family for evaluation and they are given as many referral options as possible. Parrott said that patient consultation with the psychiatrist via telemedicine is almost always recommended. This gives the psychiatrist a chance to see the student and ensure effective resources are found for them.

“Telemedicine works so well for TWITR because it provides easier access to care; convenient use for providers, patients and parents; and it reduces the amount of time students are out of class and parents are out of work,” Philips said. “Even when screening they don’t drive to Lubbock; we travel to them. Plus, it’s amazing to hear the clinicians relate how the students have an easier time telling their story (during a telemedicine session with a psychiatrist) when they’re not (in the same room) with a mental health provider.”

However, in West Texas, there are people at TTUHSC who aren’t satisfied with the status quo — who are working around the clock on positive solutions to grim realities.

TELEMEDICINE BENEFITS

Technology provides high quality video while remaining HIPPA compliant.

Can link a psychiatrist familiar with the student’s medication to the primary care physician who isn’t.

Cuts wait times for serious situations from weeks to days and in a few cases, minutes.

TWITR GAINS ACCESS TO STUDENTS One of the biggest challenges when designing the program was getting into the schools, Philips said. The team had to find a way to build trusting relationships with school administrations to offer service. They found an opportunity in state-mandated protocol to provide personnel with annual suicide prevention training. Youth Mental Health

First Aid is an approved program by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for this mandate, and the institute team is certified to teach the course.

“We decided to offer (the schools) our services, and while conducting the training, we mentioned TWITR as a preventive measure they could implement,” Philips said.

Shallowater Independent School District (ISD) was one of the first schools to sign up.

“We joined because we are continuously looking for additional services for our students,” said Kenny Border, EdD, Shallowater ISD superintendent. “An increase in low socioeconomic students and families in Texas schools obligates (the school) to serve as a vehicle to help with physical needs, which must be met prior to educational needs.”

Border said the biggest benefit to TWITR is it bridges a gap between the school setting and community resources, while also providing the school with access to telemedicine. The duty he feels toward his students stems from years of working in a school district of troubled elementary children, and he said school personnel have a responsibility to protect the well-being of their constituents.

He’s not the only one who feels this way.

“I’m a huge advocate of TWITR — it’s part of our progressive response to addressing student need,” said Chris Smith, Brownfield Independent School District superintendent. “(We) understand the importance and significance of working with our kids, detecting things earlier and getting them (professional) support.”

WHY STUDENTS NEED TWITR When I walked through the doors of the Crosbyton CISD administration building, I was instantly reminded of the small rural school I grew up in. The atmosphere evoked a sense of small-town family and, turns out, this hit closer to home than you would expect. Shawn Mason, CISD superintendent and his wife, Stacy, the school counselor are warm and friendly with a strong love for their students. They share a common bond extending past the marriage union. They are educators who pour their souls into Crosbyton CISD students.

“(Children) do what is expected of them,” Shawn said. “You lower your expectations, that is what you’ll get. If a teacher shows they love the students, then those students will work their hearts out for the teacher.”

As the district counselor, Stacy wants to show the students she cares so they’ll have an outlet in her. However, she is also grateful for the additional support TWITR provides her as well as the students.

“I drop everything to take care of a student in need,” Stacy said. “However, I’m kind of a bandage in a way. I can stop the bleeding, but my care doesn’t extend beyond ‘first-aid’ care, which is why TWITR is so valuable to us.”

TWITR’S FUTURE Currently, West Texas has multiple issues to address in the mental and behavioral health arena. Provider shortage, stigma and treatment options are just a few areas of concern. The state Legislature believes the TWITR Project has been an effective solution thus far, which is why the Texas House of Representatives Committee on Public Education included TWITR as a recommendation in their report prepared in response to the Santa Fe High School shooting.

Philips is against TTUHSC running TWITR as a state-wide model. TWITR is not a one-size fits all solution and would need tweaking depending on each region’s conditions and circumstances. However, he would like to teach the model to schools throughout the state, since the institute has a wealth of experience in developing a model and demonstrating that it works.

He has high hopes the state Legislature will give the TEA the funding it needs to provide these services to all Texas students. As he says, “Then we can get out of the business of running TWITR and into the business of teaching TWITR.”

Philips added that his team is currently working on developing TWITR-based training programs in the TexLa Telehealth ResourceCenter — a federally funded program design to provide technical assistance and resources to new and existing telehealth programs throughout Texas and Louisiana.

THE TWITR SOLUTION The revolutionary LPC component has worked well, and, while operations have been in place for several years now, Philips emphasized the program’s frequent evaluation including updates and maintenance.

“We’ve tried hard to keep it current, perfected and operated with a high degree of fidelity — we don’t want to miss a child who is seriously ill,” he said.

If you look at numbers, news articles and listen to news stations, our national situation is bleak. Mass shootings in general are increasing in number and intensity; bullying, truancy, detention and dropout rates are all areas of concern. However, in West Texas, there are people at TTUHSC who aren’t satisfied with the status quo — who are working around the clock on positive solutions to grim realities. The fight to foster optimal adolescent mental and behavioral health in West Texas and beyond is at hand. Philips, who calls himself an optimist, put it this way:

“It’s (TWITR) not about school shootings — it’s about the welfare of students.”

“However, I’m kind of a bandage in a way. I can stop the bleeding, but my care doesn’t extend beyond ‘first-aid’ care, which is why TWITR is so valuable to us.”



Read more about TTUHSC’s response to mental and behavioral health needs online at ttuhsc.edu/alumni/pulse.

“Maybe we’re in the midst of a **mental health crisis** because we’re disconnected, stressed, sleep-deprived, overworked, overleveraged, undernourished, unfulfilled, sedentary, marginalized and **addicted to our devices** – through which [social] media constantly reminds us we’re not enough as we are. Maybe it’s **not our brains** that are flawed; maybe it’s the **system we’re existing within.**” - MEGAN BRUNEAU, MA, RCC



Smartphone Use Likely Contributes to Behavioral Health Issues BY GLENYS YOUNG

Kade Abbe is your average 12-year-old boy. He likes to watch gaming videos on YouTube. He likes to message his friends. And, like most of his peers, he does all of this from his smartphone.

“All the kids at school have phones,” Kade said.

His mother, Sandy Abbe, worries he’s part of a generation that may be losing the ability to interact with other people.

“I feel like we’re less connected, even though we’re more connected,” Sandy said. “My kid can tell me anything through text — he’ll let me know how he feels. But when we’re face to face, it’s like he can’t vomit everything he wants to tell me. So, we have a disconnect there, even though we have all this connectivity.”

Muhammad Khalid Zafar, MD, assistant professor in the TTUHSC School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry at the Permian Basin, specializes in child and adolescent psychiatry. He says he frequently sees direct evidence of smartphones and social media affecting adolescents’ mental health.

“We are at a stage where we do not know exactly how much impact they have on the brain,” Zafar said. “We still need a few years of research to find out the effects of smartphones, but early research is indicating they not only affect sleep, they affect mood, behavior and lead to difficulties with attention and concentration. In our clinical practice, we routinely see kids experiencing difficulty sleeping with excessive use of smartphones.”

On school nights, Kade has to leave his phone in his parents’ room, but on weekends, he’s allowed to have it in his room like his 18-year-old brother, Christian Acevedo, for whom the rules are more relaxed. Their mother says there are stark differences.

“In the morning, he’s moody and doesn’t want to wake up,” Sandy said. “The phone plays a part in it, and I’m just as guilty. I’ll wind down by playing a crossword puzzle or checking Facebook. And then you get sucked in and, by the time you realize it an hour later, you still haven’t wound

“When it comes to knowing how we ought to think about teenagers’ use of smartphones, we can all like the smartphone in some respects — it’s a revolutionary device — but we haven’t developed the cultural norms as to how it might best be used by teens, and how we as parents and society should support those uses.”

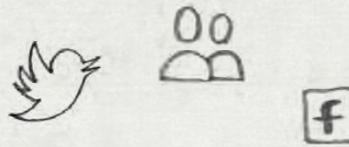
Billy Philips, PhD, MPH, executive director, TTUHSC F. Marie Hall Institute for Rural and Community Health

“The same chemicals are released in your brain when you get a text message as when you drink an alcoholic beverage, smoke a cigarette or gamble. What in essence is happening is we’re allowing children from 6 to 10 years of age access to our liquor cabinet when we give them a smartphone. They’re constantly texting so they’re continually getting high.”

John Gatica, MEd, director of Federal Programs for Communities in Schools in the South Plains — formerly a high school principal for 26 years and current PhD student in neuroscience.



Visit PULSE online at ttuhsc.edu/alumni/pulse to read the research on our brains and texting.



down because you’re still scrolling through your feed. It’s scary the amount of time we spend on our phones.”

Zafar said kids who use smartphones too much are likely copying the behavior they see in their parents, to some extent.

“We see a fair percentage of addiction signs in adolescents who are continuously using smartphones — unable to leave it, excessive use of the smartphone, anxiety if they don’t have it,” Zafar said. “In terms of behavioral problems, the irritability and anger can lead to agitation, aggression, sometimes depression and anxiety, and, a lot of times, it leads to conflict with the parents.”

Kade said he’s heard stories from peers who have gotten in trouble with their smartphones, particularly for winding up on websites they’re not supposed to be on, which he said “happens constantly and all the time.”

“It’s good to have discipline when it comes to the internet,” he added. “If our smartphone use isn’t monitored, you don’t know what we can have access to.”

Numerous media reports over the years have suggested a link between social media and an increased suicide risk in teens. While Zafar said credible research is still needed to support this, the risks are still concerning.

“We know adolescent depression (is increasing),” he said. “One symptom is low self-esteem, and, obviously, with depression comes the risk of attempting or completing suicide.”

For Sandy, it’s an uncomfortable realization that allowing her sons to use smartphones could ultimately harm them.

“I’m paying for them to have the whole world in the palm of their hands — including porn, including everything negative,” she said. “That’s the biggest risk — you could lose your kids to some kind of addiction. It’s just scary. There are so many evil things in the world you could lose them to.”

But, Zafar said, this doesn’t mean parents should try to eliminate smartphones completely either.

“This is not something you can avoid. You cannot say, ‘My kid is not going to have a smartphone ever.’ It’s going to happen (at some point),” Zafar said. “(Elimination) can have its own consequences. Kids who do not have smartphones are more likely to be a target for bullying.

“What I think is most important is considering the intellectual level of the child, gradually introducing it but keeping a close eye, monitoring their smartphone use closely and setting boundaries.”

He recommends implementing a set time after which smartphone use is not allowed and only allowing kids to visit certain websites or forums.

“Research indicates parental participation and support is vital,” Zafar said. “Parents need to establish limitations and closely monitor usage.

“But if you start seeing signs of depression, anxiety or any (potential) mental health problems, seek advice from a mental health professional.”

SANDY ABBE'S SMARTPHONE RULES:

FOR HER 12-YEAR-OLD SON, KADE:

- Parents must approve any app downloaded.
- No social media or apps rated age 13 or over — including Snapchat and Instagram.
- Phone stays in parents’ room on weeknights.

FOR HER 18-YEAR-OLD SON, CHRISTIAN:

- Allowed to use social media, including Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram.
- No phone after bedtime, which ranges between 10 and 11 p.m.

FOR THE FAMILY:

- No one in the family is allowed to use their smartphone during dinner.

"Z" is for STRESS

The Culprit(s) Behind All-Time High Stress on Generation Z

BY JO GRANT LANGSTON

The alarm rings and the day begins for 15 million U.S. high school students — according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Their schedule may be similar to the following:

- Carpool;
- Band practice before school;
- Math test;
- Social time at lunch;
- Part-time job;
- Homework;

And preparing for tomorrow, because the alarm will ring again bringing a new day with it; while just beneath the surface, stress is building.

According to the American Psychological Association's report "Stress in America: Generation Z," released October 2018, this generation considers itself more stressed than adults, registering 5.3 on a 10-point scale — next to the adult score of 4.9. Sixty-three percent of this population cite families not having enough money as a major stressor. Other issues like immigration, sexual assault and mass shootings contribute as well.

Adolescents aren't immune to the potential strains of school, home and social circles either. Triggering stress may be the pressures of making early career decisions, standardized or high-stakes testing, and the balancing act between extracurricular activities and academics.

MAKING CAREER DECISIONS Sara Villanueva, PhD, contributing writer for "Psychology Today," said today's teenagers are expected to know what they want to do — where they want to go to school and in which field they want to work — earlier than ever before. She writes, "They (teenagers) are also expected to do well and are put on 'success' tracks even in elementary school. They have to do well, because it is assumed that all (children) will/must go to college. Not just that, but they must get into the best college if they want to succeed and be competitive in today's job market."

Amy Duncan,* a mother of twin high school sophomores, Christina Duncan* and Carter Duncan,* felt the pressure of this early decision. "In the ninth grade, they chose a career path," she said. "Fortunately, they were pretty confident in what they wanted to do. However, I questioned how young teenagers, who don't even really know who they are, could make such a choice."



HIGH-STAKES OR STANDARDIZED TESTING The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exam, adopted by the Texas Legislature in 2007, is the current standardized testing required for students. For high schoolers, this test covers four different subjects at multiple comprehension levels. Failing sections of the STAAR could keep a student from graduating or require intensive tutoring — the pressure is on to pass.

Retired teacher Kelly Roberts* directly witnessed the effects of this stress on her students. In her 21-year career, testing preparations for students in pre-K through high school were a central focus of her lesson plans.

"I spent a good deal of my teaching time working with students readying them to take the standardized test," she said. "The implications of the test created enough stress for the students, but they had additional

"It seems like children have more pressures to deal with than I ever did when I was a teenager. That realization becomes clear when your kids are in middle school and high school — my two teenage sons have stressors that I didn't at that age. Sure, the majority of youth are learning to cope and problem solve through adversity — but at what cost? Are they wading through the waters and coming out stronger and more capable than previous generations? I don't think I am the right person to answer that question, but maybe it's a good question to think about."

Shawn Marie Parrott, LPC-S, senior mental health professional, TTUHSC F. Marie Hall Institute for Rural and Community Health



stress to deal with as many of them worked after school. Some had children and were working hard to make ends meet. Many were also preparing to take college entrance exams.”

Samuel Thompson, PhD, director of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Slaton Independent School District and a licensed specialist in school psychology, sees firsthand the negative reactions to high-stakes testing. “Younger students may use avoidance strategies, such as tantrums or running out of the test. Older students may elect to drop out of school. In extreme cases, students may want to self-harm. Many of my students come from economically disadvantaged homes, so the pressure of this test is yet another stressor on their lives. Some can handle the pressure and some cannot.”

Today’s STAAR test is a result of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act that supports standards-based educational reform, based on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals could improve individual outcomes in education. For states to receive federal funding, they are required to develop assessments in basic skills and to give these assessments to all students at select grade levels. Roberts agrees with the concept, but not the instrument.

“I support efforts to keep teachers and programs accountable,” she said. “The problem is with the test and how we must prepare these students. These tests are a ‘one-size-fits all’ way to gauge educational progress, and our students may not fit in those boxes. Learning disabilities are not taken into consideration. Anxiety and fear of failure may play a part. As a teacher, I was dedicated to giving my students tools to develop positive self-esteem. Unfortunately for many, the stress of taking the test overwhelmed them.”

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES/ACADEMICS Sawyer Ramsey* is a high school senior with his sights on May 2019 graduation. As a student involved in athletics, choir and the National FFA Organization, Sawyer works on homework until 11 p.m. many nights.

“Some classes are just more difficult and require more work at home,” he said. “I have tennis practice and choir practice after school, so that takes a lot of my time.”

Sawyer’s mom, Bethany Ramsey,* feels the stress herself and for him. “College is just around the corner, and we all feel a pressure for him to do well academically for his career. We want our kids to make decisions about their future, but sometimes (Sawyer) can’t really focus on that as he works so hard after school just to maintain his grades.”

Because of the competitive nature of their extracurricular activities, Sawyer and the Duncan twins find themselves balancing academics with band and choir competitions. For Sawyer, the goal is to earn a spot in the Texas Music Educators All-State Choir, and for Christina and Carter, its University Interscholastic League state competitions.

**Names have been changed.*

“I’m also a parent and have two sons myself — one’s in college and one is in high school — and I am still plugged into the everyday life of my kids. Youth today are experiencing things that most people my age never faced as children, or if we did, it was much later in our development. They’re living in a world full of pressures we have never had to deal with until later in life, so there’s a fragility there; you couple that with less engaged parenting and you come up with a bad combination.”

Chris Smith, Brownfield ISD superintendent

⇒ REALLY? ⇐

MANAGING THE STRESS Coping mechanisms exist to help teenagers and their parents navigate the road to adulthood. For Jack Martin,* a 13-year-old middle schooler, and his mom, Beverly Martin,* worrying about testing isn’t something they do.

“At home, we don’t put as much emphasis on the testing,” she said. “As parents, we aren’t worried, so we don’t pass that on to Jack. We take those test days as they come. We refuse to let the test and the stress of the test define us or him. We can look at his results and see what he missed and go from there. Texas has set an unrealistic bar for these (children), so we take it with a grain of salt.”

Carter also takes the stress of his day in stride, looking for ways to find joy in what he is doing. “If I enjoy what I’m doing, then it’s not work,” he said. “I enjoy playing trumpet, being outside and playing video games. It’s a balance.”

His twin, Christina, also uses music to help her keep her stress in check. Their mom enforces bedtime schedules and downtime away from phones as a way to help her twins succeed.

For students without support at home, other solutions are sought. The Alliance for Childhood, a nonprofit with a focus to build, strengthen and empower advocacy networks for play to improve the lives of children, is working to decrease the stress associated with these types of tests. Studies from the alliance point to stomach issues, headaches and increased dropout rates, especially among poor and minority students, as major deterrents to the continued use of high-stakes testing.

They suggest several alternatives including testing based on performance that measures not only the ability to memorize facts, but would also measure original thinking, real-world problem-solving, perseverance and social responsibility.

“We want our students to have repeated opportunities to respond to learning,” Thompson said. “That isn’t the design of high-stakes testing. The students know the implications of not doing well, and for many, this pressure plus other environmental stressors, inhibits learning.” 



A young boy with light brown hair, wearing a black t-shirt and blue shorts, is sitting on a tan plastic slide at a park. The ground is covered in orange-brown wood chips. In the background, there is a white house with a garage door and green trees. A green metal structure of the playground is visible on the left.

through their eyes

TTUHSC Alumna Advocates for Living with No Limits

By Jo Grant Langston | Photos provided by Stacy Cervenka

Imagine standing in the middle of Terminal B of the nearest airport. The route seems easy enough to Terminal A, where a plane awaits, but it's not so easy for those with limited or no sight. People traffic, cart traffic, signs that can't be read. Traveling blindly in a sighted world is a challenge.

As one who has been blind since birth, Stacy Cervenka, MSRC, (Health Professions '14), is a lifelong advocate of rights for those with disabilities, especially the blind, and has taken a giant step forward in helping this population travel their neighborhoods and the world. She shows people how living full, thriving lives, that includes travel of all kinds, is possible for all. Her passion and hard work helped her become a finalist for the coveted Holman Prize in 2018, and she is putting the \$25,000 reward toward creating the Blind Travelers Network, a free online travel forum.

"It's a place to ask fellow blind travelers how to navigate through Walt Disney World, how to look after toddlers at a water park or whether Jamaica has blind-friendly snorkeling excursions," Cervenka said.

Cervenka hopes the Blind Travelers Network will open the doors for those with blindness to travel and also bring awareness of the travel resources needed for this group of people. "We should be a primary target for the travel industry because we want to travel just as sighted people do," she said. "We have the resources to travel and just need accurate and useful information."

*Stacy Cervenka, MSRC, (Health Professions '14)
and her husband, Greg DeWall, at the park with
their son, Leo.*

no LIMITS

Cervenka hasn't allowed her disability to put limitations on her life, whether she's giving tours to visitors on Capitol Hill, creating policy for federal employees with disabilities, or handling the day-to-day responsibilities of home and family. She currently serves as the grant administrator for the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Additionally, she serves as chairperson of the Blind Parents Group of the National Federation of the Blind, designing seminars, conferences and curriculum to help blind parents care for children in a sighted world. Cervenka was also recently appointed to serve on the Star Tran Advisory Board, where she works to expand and improve transportation options for citizens with disabilities.

Before moving to Lincoln, Nebraska, in 2018, Cervenka was the executive officer for the California State Rehabilitation Council, working to ensure that Californians with disabilities were represented and empowered to receive vocational services leading to gainful employment.

"We gave voice to our workers, so they could work and thrive in our society," Cervenka said. "Employees and employers many times don't understand exactly what rights those with disabilities have. Our work helped educate about those rights and advocate for equal treatment."

Prior to her duties in California, Cervenka worked in the U.S. Senate, first as an intern and then as assistant to Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan. "My first day, I was thinking I needed to raise the bar of their expectations. In my first hour, I was sent to retrieve a chart from the printing and graphics department. Because I am blind and unfamiliar with the building, I didn't know where that was." She completed the task and gained the trust of her co-workers. Cervenka worked on myriad legislative issues pertaining to Native American rights, crime and prisons.

raising a FAMILY

Cervenka is married to Greg DeWall, director of the Nebraska Center for the Blind, who was blinded in an accident as a teenager. Together, they are raising their two children, Leo, 5 and Josephine, 1, who are sighted. They simultaneously tackle parenting, marriage and life challenges with a few extra hurdles.

"Our calling to serve those who are blind bonds us," Cervenka added. "We talk about our work together. We parent our children. We travel. Our disabilities brought us together, and we solve the issues we face. We are committed to our family and to improving the quality of blindness rehabilitation."

Cervenka knows she's not alone in her unique circumstances, which is why she is an administrator for the Facebook page, "Blind Parents Connect," a sounding board for questions, concerns and challenges of blind parents. "Logistic challenges of blind parenting such as administering medication or matching clothes is easy to overcome by learning some simple alternative techniques," she said. "The primary challenge blind parents face is stigma and negative misconceptions about their capabilities, which often leads to isolation and marginalization within other parent communities."

Our calling to serve those who are blind bonds us. Our disabilities brought us together, and we solve the issues we face.

THE BLIND TRAVELERS NETWORK Opens Dialogue FOR THE BLIND

Travelers can share information about places that are truly accessible and welcoming to those who are blind.

Common concerns often include:

A restaurant is listed as accessible, but does it have Braille menus?

Hotels offer an "accessible" spa, but is there a staff member available to guide guests to it?

Do the resorts in foreign countries allow the blind to go horseback riding, since the Americans with Disabilities Act isn't enforced?



Stacy Cervenka hired a reader to give her an in-depth description of Magic Kingdom so she could plan their route.

Life-changing EXPERIENCES

During her time on Capitol Hill, Cervenka met dignitaries from around the world, opening the door for her to experience traveling the globe. A particularly important trip was to South Korea as part of a congressional staff delegation discussing the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement. She visited Buddhist temples, enjoyed dinners in their World Trade Center and dined seated on the floor in little country restaurants. Most memorably, she visited the Demilitarized Zone, the border between North and South Korea, an experience she calls one of the most intense in her life.

“We literally stood with soldiers from the North and South standing face-to-face,” she said. “We were inside the ‘blue meeting house’ that straddles the border — so I can technically say I’ve been to North Korea. I had to give up my white cane for fear that the North Korean soldiers would think it was a weapon. I use that cane for mobility, so I was a bit uneasy about not having it with me — it was one of the few times in my life that I’ve had to give it up.”

traveling the WORLD

Approaching things differently when you’re a blind parent desiring to travel the world is vital to success.

“Though we have ziplined through the rain forest canopy in Costa Rica, hiked Mayan ruins in Belize and caught 200 pounds of tuna on a local fisherman’s boat in Mexico, the most challenging thing we’ve ever done is take our son — who was almost 3 years old at the time — to Disney World,” she said.

The trip required a different type of research and pre-planning than it would for a sighted family — there are 25 on-property resorts, four main theme parks, two water parks and an overwhelming amount of dining options. “We needed easily accessible transportation to the parks and resort staff available to take us to the boat or bus. Before we left, I hired a reader to give me an in-depth description of Magic Kingdom so I could plan the route. We needed to purchase passes and acquire disability access. At one point, we searched for a bathroom for 45 minutes! It was stressful, but one we will always remember fondly.”

Cervenka considers the family’s outings no more stressful than those of a sighted family. “We have great orientation about our travel destinations, and we are well-trained in cane mobility. With appropriate research about travel accommodations, coupled with our training, we have great experiences. Simply attaching little bells to our children’s shoes helps us stay safely connected to them at water parks or at a beach. We have great communication with the resort staffs, with each other and with our children.”

Cervenka said the misconceptions many people have of the blind is what makes traveling a challenge. One example was a planned private horseback trail ride where the stable owner refused to let them ride, even though Cervenka and DeWall had extensive riding experience. They brought in advocates from the



National Federation of the Blind and the stable’s lawyer to explain that it was against the law to discriminate against people with disabilities, based solely on perceived notions about what people can and cannot do. “Months later, we completed our ride,” she said. “We’re glad that we fought to educate this stable, but it was frustrating to fight tooth and nail just to have a pleasant ride.”

Experiences like this fueled Cervenka to develop the Blind Travelers Network.

“We want travelers to have a resource to warn others about negative attitudes they might encounter, so they can make decisions about whether to do business at a certain place,” she said. “Will they have to fight to receive service or simply take their business elsewhere? The network will give blind people the information they need to make informed choices about where they would like to travel. We can swim with the dolphins. We can ride horseback, and we can snorkel. The Blind Travelers Network will provide a base of information about those locations welcoming to our families.” 



AN OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME

Two dental educators with deep Texas roots are eager to make the Woody L. Hunt School of Dental Medicine a reality

After decades of caring for patients and serving as advocates for improved access to dental care in their communities, two dentists with Texas roots are energized by the opportunity to make history by opening the first-ever dental school in West Texas: the Woody L. Hunt School of Dental Medicine at TTUHSC El Paso.

By David Peregrino

Longtime El Paso dentist Richard C. Black, DDS, MS, was named dean of the school in May. Wendy Woodall, DDS — who graduated in 1985 from the UT Health San Antonio School of Dentistry — joined the TTUHSC El Paso dental school in September as professor and associate academic dean.

This administrative duo, along with others, has spent the past months preparing for an accreditation review by the Commission on Dental Accreditation and for degree program approval from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Black and Woodall expect to welcome the first class of dental students in 2021.

“We think it will take all of 2019 for this process to play out, and we expect to hear in early 2020 that we’ve been approved,” Black said. “That will allow us to recruit students starting in late summer 2020.”

Born and raised in El Paso, Black earned his doctorate of dental surgery in 1976 and a specialty in orthodontics in 1978 at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Dentistry. He returned to his hometown to open a private dental practice. For nearly 40 years, he cared for what he likes to call his “patient family.”

Like other El Paso-area dentists, Black had long understood the transformative possibilities of having a dental school in this underserved region. When the Hunt Family Foundation announced in 2016 a gift of \$25 million to establish a dental school at TTUHSC



El Paso County is classified as a Dental Health Professional Shortage Area by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. According to the Texas Health Institute, El Paso County has one general dentist for every 5,480 residents. That's about half the state average.

Twenty-six percent of residents in El Paso, Hudspeth, and other nearby counties in West Texas, reported not having any kind of health care coverage.

Overall, Hispanics, non-Hispanic blacks and Native Americans have the poorest oral health of all U.S. racial and ethnic groups, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Hispanic children are more likely to have untreated tooth decay compared to other racial and ethnic groups.

The Woody L. Hunt School of Dental Medicine will be a four-year school for general dentistry and is expected to accept its first class of students in 2021.

The first class will have approximately 40 students, and enrollment is expected to eventually grow to a capacity of 60 students per class year the following year. The school expects to employ 40 to 50 full-time faculty members when it opens.



El Paso, soon followed by a \$6 million grant from the Paso del Norte Health Foundation in support of the school, Black jumped at the chance to get involved. He was hired as interim dean in 2017.

Black is no stranger to leadership roles, having served as president of the El Paso Dental Society as well as the Texas Dental Association (TDA). He currently serves on the American Dental Association's National Board. He's built strong professional relationships at the state capital, serving in the past as chair of the TDA's Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Council through four sessions of the Texas Legislature.

"It's an opportunity of a lifetime, really," Black said. "Certainly, my practice was important to me, but this is an opportunity to help build something that will be here for a long, long time and will benefit not only the citizens of West Texas but also (operate) as an important hub for dental research."

Like Black, Woodall followed talk for many years within the community of a potential dental school in West Texas. After earning her dental degree, she practiced in Texas for many years before moving to Las Vegas, Nevada, to join the faculty of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas School of Dental Medicine, where she eventually became the co-associate dean of clinical affairs. She has served on the Commission on Dental Accreditation for nearly ten years.

Woodall has devoted much of her career to bringing dental care to the underserved, volunteering her time to improve the dental health of children, sheltered women, homeless families and veterans. Some of the community organizations she serves include Texas Missions of Mercy, Remote Area Medical and Give Kids a Smile.

While in Las Vegas, Woodall closely followed developments at TTUHSC El Paso, thinking it wouldn't be too difficult to transition to another desert city should an opportunity arise.

Like the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine's Medical Student Run Clinic, the Woody L. Hunt School of Dental Medicine will offer culturally competent treatment, at a reduced cost, to El Pasoans in need, while providing students with hands-on training.

"I kept watching, thinking it would be really nice to be a part of the new dental school," said Woodall. "When it received funding from the Hunt Family Foundation and the Paso Del Norte Health Foundation, I reached out

and said, 'I'd love to help if I can.' My driving force is that I am one of those people who maintained, through dental school and beyond, the desire to give back to the community. Education is the ultimate way to help the community, in my opinion."

Black and Woodall said one of the most exciting things about opening a new dental school — the first in Texas in nearly 50 years — is the opportunity to incorporate innovative educational ideas into the four-year curriculum, such as the course on society, community and individuals that has been a success at the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine. The course examines public health issues through a social, cultural, economical, political and environmental lens, and includes a volunteer service-learning component.

Additionally, the school will use the latest in dental education technology. The Dental Learning Center, housed in the Medical Sciences Building II, now under construction, will feature 80 simulation stations equipped with high-tech, movable manikins. Each station is equipped with a computer monitor and connected via LAN to an instructor station for enhanced audiovisual education. Students also will hone their fabrication skills for dental restoration devices and appliances in a laboratory featuring 3D scanners and CAD/CAM machines.

"Because we are new, we have the opportunity to have the most innovative curriculum in all of dental education," Black said. "We plan to teach in the same manner that patients come to the office — through symptoms and decision trees. We also plan to only use digital technology for lab work. We won't always be the newest school, but we will be a school that is determined to always be among the real leaders in innovative dental education."

Ultimately, Black and Woodall are driven by the transformative impact the school will have on the health of the Borderland and beyond. A cornerstone of the school will be a community dental clinic, where students will practice under the guidance of faculty dentists. The 38,000-square-foot clinic will be located on the TTUHSC El Paso campus and equipped with 130 dental operatories — working spaces that include a patient chair and room for lights, dental instruments and other equipment necessary to treat patients.

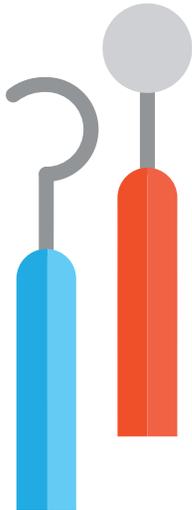
Having 130 treatment chairs available to patients in a reduced-cost clinic in El Paso will radically improve access to dental care, bridging a major gap in health care disparities in the region. The school, the clinic and seeing patients of all ages living healthier, happier lives thanks to improved dental care will be a fitting capstone to Black's and Woodall's long careers.

"It's very exciting to be able to help direct the school to become a leading institution for the nation," Woodall said. "We will reinforce with our students a continued passion for giving back to the community." 

Studies have shown that dentists tend to open practices in proximity to their dental school.

According to the Texas State Board of Dental Examiners, in 2017, there were over 300 Texas dental school graduates, but only two opened practices in El Paso. Over the past 10 years, only 22 of Texas dental graduates have chosen to practice in West Texas.

The Woody L. Hunt School of Dental Medicine's economic impact is estimated to be between \$60 million and \$90 million annually. That's in addition to the estimated \$223 million TTUHSC El Paso already contributes to the local economy each year.



STRENGTH

in

weakness

Deportation,
dropping out and
even single-parenting
couldn't keep
Yasmin Galvan from
achieving her goals

If there's one thing Yasmin Galvan (Health Professions '17) knows, it's the importance of perseverance in the face of hardships. You can say this naturalized citizen, nontraditional student and single mom of three children — one with special needs — has had plenty of experience in navigating obstacles.

At age 9, Galvan's life was permanently altered. Born in Mexico, Galvan and her family moved to Arizona when she was 2 years old, ending up in Midland shortly after. While her father had obtained citizenship, Galvan, her mother and older sister were still waiting on their citizenship paperwork to be finalized. In the meantime, their visas expired leading to deportation.

"It was brutal," she recalled. "We were separated from my dad, so that was something totally new to me. We already had a home, so he stayed in Midland to take care of it and to work. He was only able to



By Glenys Young
Photos by Neal Hinkle

There were definitely times I wanted to give up,

come see us every other weekend because of the money and everything, but he would send money home to us.

“My mom was forced to take on a role she wasn’t used to as far as managing money, so there were times she would mismanage the money, and we didn’t have a lot of help over there.”

The economic hardships were compacted with the fact that young Galvan had grown up speaking primarily English. Making the best of a tough situation, she learned to speak, read and write in Spanish.

“It was a good, bad experience,” she said. “It ended up benefitting me in the long run. I learned perseverance in focusing on my education. That’s all I had and focusing on it was my way of stabilizing things — that’s what I could control. I kept putting forth the effort; it kept me busy and kept me going.”

Coming Back to America

After nine months, her family was able to return to the U.S. legally as permanent residents, but things had changed. She had changed.

“I kept to myself after that,” Galvan said. “I didn’t get involved in any school activities or anything like that. I didn’t feel like I fit in anymore. It definitely gave me a different perspective. Even now, I feel a little bit like an outsider. I’m not an American-born citizen, so I’m different.”

The outcast feeling led to Galvan avoiding school — eventually dropping out by her junior year. However, after watching her classmates graduate, she realized she needed to do something with her life.

“My dad always instilled good work ethic in us,” she said. “We came here for a reason — the ‘American dream.’”

Balancing School and Family

At 21, Galvan became pregnant with her first child, Ariana, and decided enough was enough.

“It made me think about what kind of future I was going to give my daughter,” she added. “I was living with my parents; I didn’t have my own things. I just needed to do something with myself. I realized my situation was going to be an important factor in obtaining citizenship and giving a better life to my child.”

Galvan earned her GED and enrolled as a student at Midland College. However, she dropped out again while pregnant with her second child, Sylvester. Her third child, Versciase, was born a year later. She spent five years just focusing on her children — and for good reason.

Sylvester, who was meeting expected growth milestones at 18 months old, had stopped talking by age 2. Galvan took her son to the pediatrician, who didn’t have good news.

“They believed he had autism,” she said. “It was just a formality after that — making sure his diagnosis was correct and getting him help. We had a speech-language pathologist and occupational therapist from Early Childhood Intervention visiting us at home and working with him.”

As her children aged, Galvan decided to refocus on her education. She re-enrolled in Midland College — working there as a telephone operator and part-time admissions clerk — and earned a certificate and her associate’s degree. When thinking about her bachelor’s degree, Galvan remembered the speech-language pathologist who worked with her son. It inspired her to transfer to TTUHSC, where she graduated with a health care administration degree and is now working toward enrolling in the master’s program for speech-language pathology.

It hasn’t been easy going to school, working and raising three children.

“It has taken a lot of perseverance,” she said. “There were definitely times I wanted to give up, but my son having all the issues he did, kept me going — knowing if I failed, it was going to affect my children.”

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kept me going,
knowing if I failed,
it was going to affect my children.

Making Time to **Serve Others**

While pursuing speech-language pathology, Galvan works as a financial aid advisor at Midland College, helping students navigate the federal financial aid system. In her spare time, she became a registered tax preparer to further assist people in her community.

Considering her mother's financial management troubles, it seems Galvan has come full circle.

"It's extremely important," she said. "I know how it can affect you if you don't have your finances in order, and I also know the cost of an education. That's going up, and so is our student loan debt, which is something I definitely want my students to know about. They have to be smart.

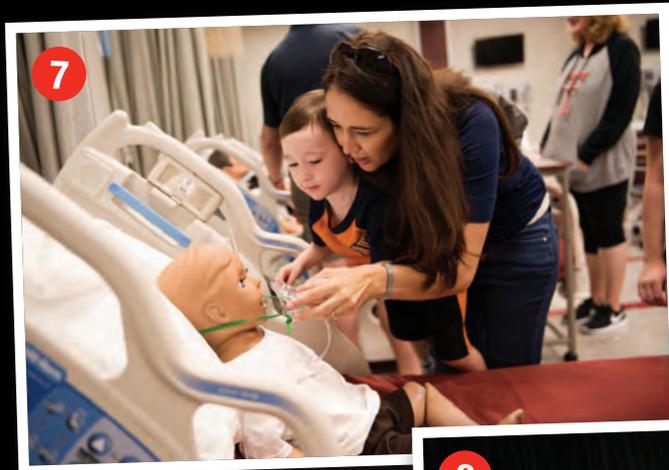
"I wish I had had financial guidance when I started going to school. I could have maximized my aid had I just followed a direct path and known what I wanted to do before I started. I do have student loan debt, and that's a reality I have to deal with."

That said, she doesn't regret her life choices because they made her stronger.

"I think I went down a crazy path," she admits. "I wish I would have stayed more focused; but, then again, our difficult experiences make us who we are, so maybe I wouldn't be who I am today if I had taken different advice at the time." 







1 TTUHSC students on five campuses volunteered on a single day in November with 17 local organizations for the annual Day of Service. 2 Tedd L. Mitchell, MD, Texas Tech University System chancellor and TTUHSC president hosted a luncheon honoring inaugural members of the TTUHSC President's Circle. For more information, visit: ttuhsc.edu 3 Guests enjoyed meeting Raider Red in Amarillo at a joint TTU and TTUHSC alumni event. 4 TTUHSC celebrated a "topping out" ceremony in December as the last beam of three buildings currently under construction on the Lubbock campus was placed. 5 The class of 2022 received their first set of medical scrubs at TTUHSC El Paso's annual Scrubs Party. 6 TTUHSC El Paso students sorted food at the El Pasoans Fighting Hunger Food Bank during Corazon de Oro community service day. 7 TTUHSC El Paso celebrated international Healthcare Simulation Week in September, by inviting the community to the Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing's Regional Simulation and Training Center. 8 The Paul L. Foster School of Medicine welcomed 100 students into the medical profession at its fifth annual White Coat Ceremony. 9 Scores of El Pasoans turned out for the Sprint for Sparks 5K Fun Run in October. The annual event benefits TTUHSC El Paso's Medical Student Run Clinic, which provides free health care services to the Sparks community.



Alumnus Wins Prestigious Award for Research

“It is such an honor to receive a National League for Nursing award so early in my career and to have colleagues who have encouraged me to ‘put my name in the hat’ for awards like this because they believed in my research. This award has affirmed my intent to continue exploration into best practices in teaching and learning with simulation. I am excited to do this right here at TTUHSC, where I first encountered simulation in the BSN program that I now teach in.”



Kyle Johnson PhD, RN, (Nursing '10) assistant professor and clinical simulation director for the School of Nursing, received the 2018 National League for Nursing (NLN) Mary Anne Rizzolo Doctoral Research Award at the NLN Education Summit.

Expert Corner

CLARK HOUSER, MBA, MLS

Clark Houser, MBA, MLS, (Health Professions '04) started his career as a lab technician on the night shift at three different hospitals in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. He is now the CEO for Atrium Medical Center in Denton, Texas, and provided *PULSE* with his five tips for achieving success.



Practice your elevator speech
Prepare for the impromptu conversations with key decision-makers.

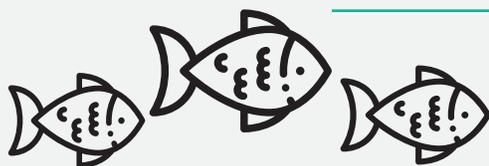


Stay hungry
Volunteer for the difficult tasks and don't be afraid to learn the material that others won't bother to figure out.

Don't get in your own way
Limitations tend to be self-imposed. Find the time and make the effort.



Don't waste your time or your mind
Know your abilities and when to ask for help.

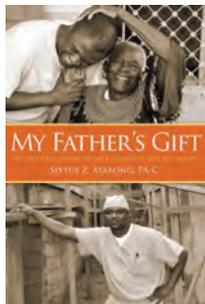


There's always a bigger fish
Stay humble and respectful at all times.



Reading Nook

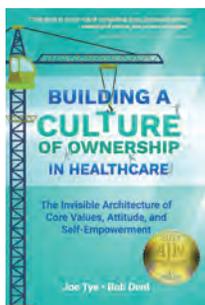
Looking for a book to read?
Support TTUHSC alumni!



“My Father’s Gift: How One Man’s Purpose Became a Journey of Hope and Healing”
by Sixtus Atabong, PA-C | (Health Professions ’05, ’02)

Story abstract (Amazon): Born into a poor West African family in the disease-stricken town of Fontem, John N. Atabong embarked into the unknown in search of hope. He was 11 years old, but he triumphed against all odds to give his children the best care and education available. Eventually, he sacrificed his most valuable possession, his son Sixtus, sending him to study in the United States with nothing more than lessons learned from his days working the farms and his father’s basic biblical teachings. Sixtus Atabong’s journey of temptations and challenges in the U.S. gives rise to a mission: to give back. He uses his gift to extend God’s healing hands and unfailing love to the far corners of the earth through sustainable health care infrastructures. Fulfilling his father’s dream, Sixtus hopes that he can leave the world a better place than he found it. (Also, read Sixtus Atabong’s story in the Summer 2015 issue of *PULSE*.)

Available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble Inc., Goodreads and others



“Building a Culture of Ownership in Healthcare”
by Bob Dent, DNP, RN | (Nursing ’10)

Story abstract (Amazon): Using construction as their metaphor, authors Joe Tye and Bob Dent make a compelling case that an organization’s invisible architecture, a foundation of core values, a superstructure of organizational culture and the interior finish of workplace attitude is no less important than its visible architecture. The book takes readers on a journey from accountability to ownership, providing a proven model and strategies to help improve organizational culture in the health care setting.

Available on Amazon and Sigma Marketplace

“The Heart of a Nurse Leader: Values-Based Leadership for Healthcare Organizations”
by Bob Dent, DNP, RN | (Nursing ’10)

Story abstract (Amazon): Management is a job description; leadership is a life decision. Nurses do not need a

management title to be the sort of leader who inspires and influences others. This book is both a celebration of the nursing calling and a practical guide to being a better nurse leader. Bob Dent and Joe Tye share values-based life and leadership strategies that every nurse leader needs to know and practice. The book is structured around the Twelve Core Action Values, a program that has been central to the cultural transformation at Midland Health and many other organizations and, more importantly, has been transformative in the lives of thousands of people who have made a personal commitment to practice the values-based life and leadership skills featured in that course.

Available on Amazon and Goodreads



“The Best Laid Flight Plans” by Leigh Dreyer
(Jessica Washer, MS, CCC-SLP) | (Health Professions ’12)

Story abstract (Amazon): In this modern *Pride and Prejudice* variation, Capt. William “Fitz” Darcy has just received a new

assignment as an instructor pilot at Meryton Air Force Base. Soon he meets the intrepid 2nd Lt. Elizabeth Bennet, a new student at the base that he cannot keep out of his head. Bennet, on the other hand, finds Darcy to be arrogant and prideful and attempts to avoid him at every turn. Despite Darcy’s insulting manners, Bennet soars her way through pilot training, but can she soar her way into love as well?

Available on Amazon and Goodreads

TTUHSC Alumni Association National Advisory Board Update

The TTUHSC Alumni Association National Advisory Board (NAB) met in October in Lubbock. A presentation was given on the School of Nursing Veteran to BSN Program, and board members toured the University Center to see the new location of the alumni office.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Jason Acevedo, MD, (Medicine '05) partner and physician — Ear, Nose and Throat Specialists of Abilene, Abilene, Texas.

Elias Ghandour, MD, (Resident '88) gastroenterologist — Covenant Medical Center, Lubbock, Texas.

Ashley Sturgeon, MD, (Medicine '10) dermatologist and assistant professor — Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, Lubbock, Texas.



2,373

Current Members

11 Lifetime Members

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Julie Doss, JD, former senior director of TTUHSC Alumni Relations, has taken a new position in the Texas Tech University System. Cliff Wilkes is serving as interim director. For alumni information, send an email to ttuhscalumni@ttuhsc.edu



\$50,830

total membership dues

GOALS FOR THE NEW YEAR

NAB President **Greg Thompson, MBA**, (Health Professions '02) said the association identified goals for the coming year:

- Conduct an annual survey of alumni association members to determine if their needs are met.
- Make alumni merchandise available online, and possibly offering discounts to association members.



\$20,380

gifts over dues

friends we'll miss

TTUHSC

Brandey L. Ackerman, MD,
(Medicine '11) died June 7, 2018.

Jay Crofoot died September 14, 2018.
He, along with his wife, Virginia, established
the TTUHSC Endowed Chair in Epilepsy.

Cynthia Kidd, DNP, (Nursing '15)
died January 18, 2019.

Wyatt McMahon, PhD, (Biomedical
Sciences '07) died September 13, 2018.

Hannah Thompson died November 21, 2018.
She was a student at TTUHSC at Amarillo
in the School of Pharmacy.

*Gifts in memory of or in honor of are routed to the
desired location of the donor through the TTUHSC
Office of Institutional Advancement, 3601 Fourth
Street, Stop 6238, Lubbock, Texas 79430.*

TTUHSC El Paso

Matthew Certosimo, MD, died May 8, 2018.
He was completing his medical residency in
psychiatry at TTUHSC El Paso.

Kharisma Ashlee James, BSN, (GGHSON '17)
died Aug. 13, 2018. She was an operating
room/surgery nurse at the Hospitals of
Providence in El Paso.

*Gifts in memory of or in honor of are routed to the
desired location of the donor through the TTUHSC
El Paso Office of Institutional Advancement,
1414 N. Oregon St., El Paso, TX 79902.*



To commemorate their first five years as doctors, the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine's inaugural class reunited in El Paso in June 2018. Initiated by Grace Ng, MD, and Jillian Sanford, MD, the alumni organized the reunion to thank the community that made their medical education possible.

Paul L. Foster School of Medicine Welcomes Inaugural Class Back to El Paso

Five years ago, the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine graduated its inaugural class. While many of the 40 graduates went to other cities in the state and nation to complete their residencies, El Paso was where they first donned white coats and became doctors — giving the border city a special place in their hearts. The border city serves as a constant reminder of why they chose to practice medicine, so it seemed fitting for the class to have a five-year reunion in commemoration of their achievements.

When Grace Ng, MD, reunion organizer, thinks of the class of 2013, she thinks of one word: pioneers.

“All 40 of us came in knowing that we were the first group, and we were more than willing to make whatever needed to happen, happen,” she said. “I think that goes with how we made this (reunion) happen. When we say we’re going to do something, we just do it.”

Alumna Jillian Sanford, MD, who worked with Ng to organize the reunion, said it was a privilege to be a part of the inaugural class.

“From the moment we stepped on campus, I could feel the excitement of the El Paso community having a medical school, and what that would mean for the community moving forward,” she said. “This energized me and many of my classmates. We were lucky to have access to world-class facilities, including our simulation center, and to be taught by a group of professors genuinely invested in improving our education through a unique curriculum based on problem solving.”

Returning to the TTUHSC El Paso campus, Ng was impressed with how the university has changed.

“This place has grown, undoubtedly, and so it’s neat to see just how far it’s come since we started,” she said. “I think the growth of the school is just amazing, and I can’t be more grateful to have been part of the starting class.”

10 YEARS.

That's a lot of memories.

TTUHSC El Paso's Paul L. Foster School of Medicine is celebrating 10 years, and we want to hear from you!

Help us take a trip down memory lane and submit your favorite memories or photos from those first years at the school of medicine. Share them with us, and you'll be featured on social media and in the new TTUHSC El Paso Alumni & Friends magazine.

Send your memories to
news.ep@ttuhsc.edu



**TTUHSC
EL PASO**
Texas Tech University
Health Sciences Center El Paso

SILVIA DEGOLLADO, MSN, NP-C

Family Nurse Practitioner

Mario Anzaldua, MD, Mission, Texas

Graduate: 2017

ALEXANDER AUSTIN

WALKING BESIDE THEM: Silvia Degollado, MSN, NP-C, often sees her past reflected in her patients. "I know where they're coming from, (which) makes it even more of an honor to be able to care for those in this community," she said.

FINDING PURPOSE: Degollado grew up in a family of third-generation migrant farm workers. The family would travel annually from their South Texas home north to Michigan, chasing harvest season. Degollado learned the value of hard work at a young age, working in the fields for extended hours in various harsh environments. She also saw firsthand the barriers that exist in accessing health care and wanted to be a part of the solution.

Degollado said nursing was a career that called her instead of one she openly chose. She said the death of her 15-year-old brother planted the seed for this career path, which was encouraged by her fiancé and now husband, Andres.

SERVICE AND INSPIRATION: "In my heart, I always knew I was meant to go into nursing. There were challenges – I had my twin girls while I was in school – but it totally makes sense now. This is what I was meant to do and where I'm meant to be, and I hope my story is one that inspires someone else to persevere."

BY DANETTE BAKER

KACI BOHN, PHD

Associate Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences

Harding University, College of Pharmacy, Searcy, Arkansas

Graduate: 2011

JEFF MONTGOMERY

A SURPRISE: While attending graduate school in pharmaceutical sciences in Amarillo, Kaci Bohn, PhD, discovered one of her greatest challenges in life would also be one of the most inspiring — she was pregnant. Bohn recalls taking a toxicology class where they studied real-life cases of pediatric poisonings. “It scared me thinking about all of the things in the world that could hurt our children,” Bohn said.

A GROWING PASSION: Bohn’s concern for the misuse of medication and accidental poisonings, especially in children, continued while teaching at Harding University College of Pharmacy. Inspired by the Medication Cleanout at TTUHSC’s Amarillo campus, Bohn enlisted the help of colleague, Jeanie Jaramillo-Stametz, PharmD, (Pharmacy ’01), managing director of the Texas Panhandle Poison Center and assistant professor of Pharmacy Practice for TTUHSC at Amarillo, to start the event in Searcy, Arkansas.

GOING FURTHER: Currently, Bohn is developing a medication safety curriculum for children under the age of 12.

The process began with an idea Bohn had for a children’s book and grew from there. The main character of her book, Morty, is a medicine capsule that turns red when children come in contact with medications they don’t know. She plans to publish her curriculum this spring with the hopes of taking it into local schools.

BY ABBI BRICKEY

SHANA ROBINSON, PA

Lead Advanced Practice Practitioner

Envision Healthcare at Pearland Medical Center, Pearland, Texas

Graduate: 2009

KEN KOSUB/LIMELIGHT FILMS.TV

A BALANCING GAME: Shana Robinson, PA, is no stranger to hard work and dedication. After years of balancing schoolwork and athletics, Robinson continued her education as a student in the TTUHSC Physician Assistant program at Permian Basin.

The physician assistant profession was created around the idea of collaboration, similar to athletics. "It teaches you that you have to prioritize — it teaches you leadership — it teaches you teamwork," Robinson said.

FINDING A NICHE: While working in her full-time management role at Envision Healthcare, Robinson spent two years fulfilling qualification requirements and passed a board exam in summer 2018 to earn a Certificate of Added Qualifications in Emergency Medicine. Robinson became one of only 20 people in Texas, and one of few nationwide, to receive the certification. In 2018, in addition to working for Envision Healthcare, Robinson started a company called Code Health, which focuses on advanced emergency training for medical professionals and educating the public.

STAYING THE COURSE: Robinson is set to graduate this year with a doctorate in health sciences from the A.T. Still University School of Osteopathic Medicine in Mesa, Arizona, with an emphasis in leadership. "I would do it all over again," Robinson said about her journey and the work it took to accomplish her goals.

BY ABBI BRICKEY



RAJ CHHADUA, PHARM D

Principal Managing Partner

ReNue Apothecary GP, PLLC, Frisco, Texas

Graduate: 2002

THE FRIENDLY NUDGE: Raj Chhadua, PharmD, was working for Walgreens as a photo clerk before one of the store's pharmacists encouraged him to consider a pharmacy career. After receiving his doctor of pharmacy degree from TTUHSC, Chhadua remained with the chain and eventually earned a promotion to district pharmacy supervisor — responsible for 126 pharmacists in 42 stores producing approximately \$185 million in revenue annually.

A SHOT IN THE ARM: While at Walgreens, Chhadua also was instrumental in transitioning 296 north, central and west Texas company stores into immunization centers by executing a program to train and certify 675 pharmacists.

PRESCRIPTION TO LEAD: Chhadua also leads the Texas Pharmacy Association as its president-elect, using his unique perspective of pharmacy from both small business and global scale standpoints to represent the industry and to help propel it forward into the future.

"Pharmacy and health care are changing fast, and it is the responsibility of every TTUHSC and School of Pharmacy alum to give back through their practice and help future health care providers, and it is our job to protect and innovate the profession."

BY MARK HENDRICKS



NEAL HINKLE

MARCO GUTIERREZ, MD

Family Medicine Physician

Marco Gutierrez, MD, and Associates in Alamo and McAllen, Texas

Graduate: 1992

PURPOSE: A motorcycle accident in 1983 left Marco Gutierrez, MD, hospitalized for 25 days with time to think about his future. He decided to go to medical school. As a family medicine physician in private practice now, he uses his story to encourage others. "I try to tell every adolescent I run into, you need to be persistent. Don't let anybody tell you, 'You can't do it.' My high school counselor told me I should be a mechanic. My college counselor said, 'You're just not medical school material.' It taught me perseverance," Gutierrez said.

LIKE FATHER LIKE SON: In a bizarre twist of events, Gutierrez's 26-year-old son is now following in his dad's footsteps. "He almost died on us last year," Gutierrez said. "He was traveling in Amsterdam and contracted influenza, which led to sepsis and acute respiratory distress."

Ultimately, his son recovered and is pursuing a different career than originally intended. He's now working toward medical school.

LITTLE VICTORIES: "The real victories are not big ones that come like fireworks," he said. "It's the little ones, when you don't even know you've made a difference and somebody says, 'Remember that conversation? It really helped,' or, 'That problem I had, you nailed it — thanks a lot.' As a family doctor, a lot of little victories add up and sustain you."

BY GLENYS YOUNG



ALYSSA SALCIDO, MS

Medical Student, Class of 2022

Paul L. Foster School of Medicine, El Paso, Texas

Graduate: 2018 (TTUHSC El Paso)

IGNITING THE DREAM: As a sophomore in high school, Alyssa Salcido participated in the National Youth Leadership Forum on Medicine, a summer program for students interested in health care careers.

"It was there I decided I would go to medical school and become a doctor," Salcido recalled. The fact that El Paso now had a four-year medical school made her dream seem even more possible.

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION: Salcido embarked on her journey with an intense focus one would expect from a high achiever. She earned her bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Texas at El Paso in 2015 and charted a path to medical school by enrolling in TTUHSC El Paso's Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in fall 2016. She knew the advanced study of subjects such as biochemistry, biology and genetics — and the research experience — would help make her a strong candidate for medical school.

The many years of study were rewarded when Salcido was accepted into the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine class of 2022.

GIVING BACK: A single mother of a 4-year-old daughter, Salcido said she can always count on her family through the ups and downs of university life.

"It's been stressful (juggling motherhood and school), but my parents have helped us out a lot. My dad and mom have always encouraged me to follow my dreams," she said. "My whole family is in El Paso, and they are always there for me."

With a deep appreciation for the community where she was born and raised, Salcido says she has her sights set on becoming a pediatrician and opening a practice in El Paso.

BY DAVID PEREGRINO

HALEY PARSONS, BSN, RN

Interim Nurse Manager — Pediatrics

El Paso Children's Hospital, El Paso, Texas

Graduate: 2016

TOMMIE MORELOS

FAMILY PUSH: Haley Parsons, BSN, RN, credits her aunt and father for pushing her toward a career in nursing. Her aunt was a nurse and great role model, and when Parsons was in high school, her father encouraged her to enroll in the district's vocational program, which prepped students for nursing assistant certification. She successfully completed the program, and the experience motivated her to become a registered nurse.

MORE THAN A NUMBER: While considering nursing schools, Parsons said she noticed the personal touch of TTUHSC El Paso right away.

"I felt like Gretchen Ruiz (Unit Manager in the Office of Student Affairs) was invested in me and really wanted me in the program," Parsons said. "And, once I was in the program, I noticed that all the professors knew me by name. I wasn't just a number in a class. Everyone was invested in making sure I succeeded."

PREPARED: Soon after starting as a nurse at El Paso Children's Hospital, Parsons was named interim nurse manager. The quick promotion was unexpected, but Parsons said her education from TTUHSC El Paso's Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing prepared her well.

"It's a pediatric medical-surgical unit. Very busy, but I've enjoyed it," Parsons said. "Even as a new graduate, you know how to respond. (GGHSON) did an amazing job of making sure I not only received lecture (education), but also the hands-on skills."

"It's such a rewarding career. I work with kids, and they surprise you with all sorts of things. They'll color a picture for you, or say something to make you laugh ... those moments are priceless."

RETURNING TO TTUHSC EL PASO: Parsons' career advancement has made her hungry for more education. To help her perform in her job, and perhaps become an educator herself, Parsons plans on pursuing a Master of Science in Nursing.

"Soon, I'm going to be back at TTUHSC El Paso," Parsons said.

BY JAY KOESTER



THOMAS TULLIUS, MD

Interventional Radiology Fellow

University of Chicago Medical Center, Chicago, Illinois

Graduate: 2013

INTERNSHIP, WIFE LEAD TO A CAREER CHANGE: Thomas Tullius, MD, did not initially plan on becoming a physician; his interests led him to earn an undergraduate degree in chemical engineering at Princeton University. An internship at the pharmaceutical company Merck & Co. piqued an interest in medicine, but real inspiration came from Zoe Shapleigh, a medical student he met at Princeton. She often discussed interesting topics from medical school, sparking Tullius' fascination. She is now a neonatologist — and his wife. The couple continues to enjoy discussions of medicine at the dinner table.

SPECIAL DELIVERY: After two years of working as a chemical engineer, Tullius ultimately could not resist the lure of medicine. A native of El Paso, he applied to and was accepted into the inaugural class of the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine. Tullius' most memorable experience during medical school is a bit cliché, at least to him, but happened when he delivered a baby on his own for the first time.

"It was one of the first times that I was actively involved in someone's medical care by myself," he said. "I felt so privileged to be a part of such a special moment for a family."

For Tullius, medicine offers the best of both worlds: the opportunity to be a caregiver and healer, and, befitting an engineer, the opportunity to explore advances in science and technology. This is why he became interested in interventional radiology upon completion of his diagnostic radiology residency.

"I feel like interventional radiology lets me combine the intellectual aspect of radiology with cutting-edge procedures. It's a perfect fit for me," Tullius said.

PUTTING PATIENTS AT EASE: Reflecting on his time at the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine, Tullius said the school's patient-centered approach that incorporates immersion in conversational and medical Spanish has helped him immensely in his career.

"As an interventionalist, (my PLFSOM education) has allowed me to connect with patients and put them at ease, especially prior to some of the more complex procedures we perform."

BY LEONARD MARTINEZ

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TOPTEN

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Whether it's a **state-of-the-art performance theater** like The Buddy Holly Hall or a **Tier One designated institution** like Texas Tech University, Lubbock makes it easy for families to work and play.

With a **16-minute commute time**, **affordable housing prices**, **more than 80 parks** and **nearly 1,000 restaurants**, it's no wonder the city offers a robust workforce that enjoys the perks of living in one of the top **10 Best Cities to Raise a Family** (Zumper).



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Museum of Texas Tech University

Couple quality of life with available jobs, and perhaps, that's why more and more health care professionals are finding that now is the time to replant roots in Lubbock. To make it easier to find open positions, the Lubbock Economic Development Alliance (LEDA) has stepped in to act as a conduit between job-seeking health care professionals and health care systems.

"The health care industry is a leading force in our local economy," said Christine Allen, director of workforce development for LEDA. "LEDA has listened to our health care organizations, and we are assisting with the effort to recruit highly skilled, in-demand employees to our community."

One way LEDA is accomplishing this task is through return2lbbk.org, which features concentrated, valuable job openings in a variety of industries.

"Aside from available job openings, return2lbbk.org offers information about life in Lubbock and video testimonials of former alumni/Lubbockites who returned to the 'Hub City,'" Allen said.

In fact, Lubbock has been recognized nationally for its wealth of opportunity and was recently named one of the Top 10 Cities to Raise a Family. It also landed on SmartAsset's list of Top 10 Best Cities with the Best Work-Life Balance .

"We've always had an excellent quality of life in Lubbock," said John Osborne, president and CEO of LEDA. "Now Lubbock is investing in a variety of ways to enhance it. In the last few years, we've seen dozens of restaurants and retail stores come online, and our local attractions continue to grow and expand, making Lubbock a well balanced city that people want to live and work in."

For more available health care positions and other employment opportunities in Lubbock, please visit www.return2lbbk.org or call 800.687.5330.



High Noon Concert Series



Texas Tech Game Day



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HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER™
EL PASO

TTUHSC EL PASO EMPLOYEES GIVE BACK

Employees at TTUHSC El Paso quickly find that working for the university isn't just a job. Having a close-up view of medical education and research, and seeing how the community benefits from improved access to health care, inspires a desire to ensure the university succeeds.

The desire to go above and beyond by giving back to the university inspired TTUHSC El Paso's Employee Giving Campaign. The campaign encourages faculty and staff to support programs at TTUHSC El Paso through payroll deductions or one-time gifts.



Learn more about TTUHSC El Paso's Employee Giving Campaign online at elpaso.ttuhsoc.edu/employee-giving



The 100+ pages of a commemorative 12"x12" coffee table book brings to life TTUHSC's rich history through photographs and stories.

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A Baby for a Chicken

Over the course of 50 years, O.W. "Babe" English, MD, and Ewell L. Hunt, MD, covered the gamut of health care needs — from treating the common cold to major operations. Sue Sexton, Hunt's daughter, recalls her father making house calls to deliver babies and receiving payment in chickens or eggs or whatever the new parents could afford to give.

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