TTUHSC Opens Third Building on Abilene Campus

TTUHSC and Abilene community leaders came together Sept. 15 to celebrate the opening of TTUHSC’s newest building on its Abilene campus, which will be home to the future School of Public Health.

Made possible through private donations, the future school will occupy the third building on the Abilene campus adjacent to the School of Nursing and School of Pharmacy buildings. Graduates of the future School of Public Health will become qualified experts in managing data and providing important and timely health-related resources to communities in need. (Read more about TTUHSC’s public health program in the Winter 2015 issue of PULSE at http://bit.ly/2hRcYB4.)

TTUHSC President Tedd L. Mitchell, MD, said the future school will act as a resource for the region, by acquiring and providing data vital to those in the public and private sectors who seek to better understand the factors that impact the health of citizens.

“Through educational and research programs, the future School of Public Health will address the growing needs of our region and state by providing professionals trained to study and preserve the health of communities,” said Mitchell.

“We could not have done this without the support of the Abilene community and the hard work of its leaders,” he added. “This future school adds an entirely new dimension to TTUHSC’s mission to serve the great folks of West Texas and beyond.”

F. Marie Hall SimLife Center Chosen as Test Site for Holographic Technology

F. Marie Hall SimLife Center has been named one of two medical simulation centers nationwide to participate in a pilot study with San Diego State University using holographic technology created by Pearson.

The goal, said Sharon Decker, PhD, RN, associate dean for simulation, is to increase simulation learning while improving the quality of education and overall health care.

“This project is consistent with TTUHSC’s aim to be a thought leader and innovator,” Decker said. “This unprecedented collaboration between higher education and industry will solve real problems in medical education.”

The mixed reality pilot will incorporate Microsoft HoloLens, the world’s first untethered, head-mounted computer. The content will be created using Microsoft’s holographic video capture capability to process video of people with various health concerns into holograms for students to experience in a clinical setting.

“Many health care programs would love to have standardized patients as part of their curriculum,” said Peter Campbell, director of strategy for Pearson Immersive Learning Solutions. “Finding, hiring, training and maintaining a highly skilled and diverse set of standardized patients is incredibly expensive and complex. Our solution is to build a set of standardized patient holograms that will bring the value of standardized patients to health care programs at a fraction of the cost and with much less complexity to deliver.”

Pearson is currently focusing on creating three patient simulations: 1) going through the stages of anaphylaxis progressing to respiratory failure; 2) an elderly person who needs to be evaluated for physical and cognitive pathologies; and 3) a patient experiencing a progressive decline in either their physical or cognitive state.

The company is looking to apply their hologram technology across disciplines by creating holographic models that will allow students to observe phenomena in chemistry, anatomy, physiology, history, mathematics, economics, art and design in three-dimensional detail.
Growing up in Dallas, Yasmine Alhasan, PharmD, (Pharmacy ’16) always wanted to make a difference through health care. She started achieving that goal at TTUHSC, where she became a student leader for the School of Pharmacy’s Class of 2016 and the Texas Pharmacy Association (TPA).

“I became involved with TPA during my first year of pharmacy school,” Alhasan said. “I had an interest in law and policy prior to pharmacy school, and TPA was the perfect place for me to expand upon my interests with other pharmacists. Involvement in the legislative process is incredibly important since it governs how we practice, and I wanted to work in that role.”

Encouraged by her TPA mentors, Alhasan founded the Student Pharmacist Recovery Network (SPRN) during her final year of pharmacy school. Through SPRN, she began working within the School of Pharmacy and the community to dismantle the stigma that often surrounds mental health and addiction issues. Because she also saw a need to reach out to students who may be dealing with those issues on a personal level, she tied SPRN to the Professional Recovery Network, an organization that aids health care professionals in Texas.

“As pharmacists, we must lead by example to change how our nation views mental health and its related topics of addiction and suicide,” Alhasan said. “I also think it is incredibly important to provide confidential and reliable resources for our student body through peer outreach groups. As health care professionals, we focus our attention on the health of others while often times neglecting our own.”

In July, Alhasan completed a two-year term as president of TPA’s Student Board of Directors. She also was named the group’s 2016 Distinguished Student Pharmacist, an award that recognizes a fourth-year pharmacy student in Texas who has demonstrated leadership and advanced the practice of pharmacy through their service to the community and TPA. Alhasan says the award is important to her because TPA changed the course of her career.

“The organization helped me find what I was passionate about and allowed me to expand on my interests,” she said. “I think sometimes as health care professionals we focus so much on health and wellness that we tend to neglect areas of legislation and policy within the health care system that are equally important. TPA showed me that it was possible to do both and that my voice mattered even as a student pharmacist.”

Alhasan presently works as a relief pharmacist at several Walgreens retail and specialty pharmacy locations in central Dallas. She enjoys the direct interaction she has with her patients, and she sees firsthand the value and impact community pharmacists have on public health.

“As a new practitioner, I am in the process of figuring out how I am able to make the biggest impact in relation to issues that I think are important,” Alhasan said. “I am a pharmacist, but I am also a human first, and I think there are many opportunities for health care professionals to contribute that are not just strictly health care initiatives.”
TTUHSC broke ground Nov. 15 for construction of a new 51,000-square-foot Academic Building in Odessa.

In August, the facilities committee of the TTU System Board of Regents voted to approve construction of the new building. The project’s $22.3 million budget includes more than $14.25 million in tuition revenue bonds authorized by the 84th Texas Legislature. In addition, more than $5.54 million will come from institutional funds.

The Academic Building will house lecture halls, classrooms, research laboratories, offices, conference areas and additional support space. These facilities will allow the Permian Basin campus to increase the number of graduate students it accepts for medical and other health care disciplines.

The expansion will also help leverage funds for TTUHSC’s campaign (See pages 24-29).

“Odessa and Midland have long recognized the importance of TTUHSC to the Permian Basin,” said Dan Hollmann, a community champion for The Campaign for Your Life, Our Purpose and a shareholder and attorney with Atkins, Hollmann, Jones, Peacock, Lewis & Lyon Inc. in Odessa. “We have been working with the administration of TTUHSC for many years to obtain the funding for the new Academic Building. The communities have come together to help provide a state-of-the-art educational facility for the students of the Permian Basin. The growth of our Permian Basin campus shows TTUHSC is committed to providing the best education to students in Midland and Odessa.”

Elementary Students Role Play Physicians During Mini Camp
Kafayat Busari remembers the impression a museum event made on her at a young age and hopes spending the day as a doctor did the same for a group of elementary students from Post, Texas.

The Student National Medical Association (SNMA) hosted Doctors for a Day Mini Camp in late October. Busari, SNMA president and TTUHSC second-year medical student, said the organization wanted to create an interactive and fun way to expose students to the field of medicine.

Students got a hands-on experience at the F. Marie Hall SimLife Center diagnosing patients with different medical scenarios, working with ultrasound equipment to learn how physicians use it, and learning CPR to “Staying Alive.”

“Our goal is to make this fun and interactive for the students and host this camp annually for students throughout West Texas,” Busari said. “Many students may have never imagined they too can go into this profession. Our hope is that the students will walk away knowing they too can become a doctor.”
The American Cancer Society recognized RAED ALALAWI, MD, this summer during the Lubbock Cattle Baron’s Ball as the recipient of the 2016 Silver Stirrup Medical Award. Alalawi was co-founder of the School of Medicine Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine Fellowship and currently serves as associate program director. He also established a comprehensive interventional pulmonary service, which was the first in West Texas, and has been involved in smoking cessation programs through the Department of Psychology in the TTU College of Arts and Sciences and the American Cancer Society.

NINH (IRENE) M. LA-BECK, PHARMD, received the 2016 New Investigator Award from the American College of Clinical Pharmacy. The award is presented in recognition of significant research contributions in clinical pharmaceutical science and of a research program that includes a substantial publication record, a programmatic theme or an especially noteworthy single publication.

Many of La-Beck’s peer-reviewed research papers, review articles, book chapters and abstracts have been published in leading research journals, including Cancer Medicine; Clinical Pharmacology & Therapeutics; Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics; and Nanomedicine: Nanotechnology, Biology, and Medicine.

La-Beck is an assistant professor in the Department of Immunotherapeutics and Biotechnology at the School of Pharmacy at Abilene. Her current research focuses on understanding how interactions between anticancer drugs and the immune system alter the immune response against tumors. With funding from a National Institutes of Health grant, and by utilizing a combination of studies in cells, animals and patients, her research team has uncovered new ways a class of nanoparticle anticancer drugs currently used in the clinic can affect and regulate cell immunity.

THE BREAST CANCER CENTER OF EXCELLENCE received a two-year, $300,000 grant from the Cancer Prevention Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) to fund the creation of a program to teach breast cancer screenings to other medical organizations personnel. This was the third award to the center from CPRIT, but the first for this program.
School of Medicine Receives National Ranking for Family Medicine Residency

Congratulations to the School of Medicine for ranking 12th in the nation for medical schools specializing in family medicine. This latest ranking comes from the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM) and is based on the percentage of students choosing a career in family medicine over a three-year period.

The School of Medicine was the only allopathic medical school in Texas that was on the Medical Doctor Granting Medical School list. The American Academy of Family Physicians national ranking was from their October *Family Medicine* Journal.

The Texas Medical Association reported Texas has about 43,000 physicians for a population of about 23 million. Texas has only 62 primary care physicians per 100,000 population, ranking 46th in the nation.

Providing primary care physicians for Texas has been a priority for the School of Medicine. In 2010, the school began the Family Medicine Accelerated Track (FMAT) program, which allows primary care students at the School of Medicine to complete their degree in three years at half of the cost of the standard four-year medical degree program that would provide more primary care physicians received national coverage. The FMAT was the first three-year medical degree approved by the nationally recognized accrediting authority for medical education. Eleven other medical schools have developed or are developing similar programs.

CMN Gift to Provide New Home for TTUHSC Pediatric Services

Children’s Miracle Network is contributing $6 million toward a stand-alone pediatric specialty facility that will be constructed on the grounds of TTUHSC’s Amarillo campus.

The gift was formally announced Nov. 18. Jodi Reid, director of CMN-Amarillo for the Harrington Cancer and Health Foundation Children’s Miracle Network, said the building will house all of TTUHSC’s pediatric specialties including cardiology, nephrology, neurology, endocrinology, hem-oncology, special needs, gastroenterology and pulmonology. She said the facility will significantly aid TTUHSC’s efforts to bring new pediatric specialties, and recruit specialized pediatric practitioners to its Amarillo campus.

“This project will provide a home for pediatric specialty physicians and will allow children to receive the care they need close to home,” Reid said. “This gift will not only transform Amarillo and the TTUHSC campus, it will make an exceptional difference in the lives of pediatric patients in the Texas Panhandle area.”

As an assistant professor, public health consultant, pastor’s wife and mother to eight boys (with a ninth baby due in March), Julie St. John, DrPh, MPH, MA, rarely has a moment when she’s not teaching. Luckily, it is a job she loves.

“I enjoy the opportunity to learn from each other, and the hands-on component and encouraging creativity,” said St. John, assistant professor in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Department of Public Health.

St. John has spent over 15 years educating others in the field of public health. Previously, she taught community health workers at Texas A&M University and developed over 400 hours of curriculum for the school.

When TTUHSC founded an MPH program, St. John was hired in 2014 to start the program in Abilene. Now she is preparing to launch the online MPH program in fall 2017. Currently, the only other school in Texas to offer an online MPH is the University of North Texas, but students must be a CEO or CFO to enroll. TTUHSC will be one of the first in the state to offer an open generalist MPH online degree.

“This is pretty significant,” said St. John, who will serve as director of the online MPH program. “We feel like we will help reach a void.”

Though she is extremely passionate about public health, St. John admits it wasn’t her first choice as a career. Originally, she got her master’s in cross cultural communications from Southwestern Baptist Theology Seminary, with plans to later attend medical school. But each time she traveled overseas as part of her education and training in communications, her heart was pulled towards public health needs at the population level.

She decided to get a second master’s in public health. When she was accepted into medical school a few years later, she turned it down, pursuing her doctorate in public health instead, a choice she is still proud of today.

“The grass root changes at population levels and working in the community was what interested me,” St. John said. “I like the opportunity to see communities take responsibility and make changes.”

Did you know ...

- Julie St. John is bilingual in English and Spanish. She also took classes in American Sign Language, because her childhood best friend was deaf.
- Her eight boys range in age from 3-20 years old. Will her ninth be a girl? She is waiting to be surprised!
- She enjoys cooking and baking, especially fudge, cinnamon rolls and Christmas candy.
- Her best advice to students: Pursue something you enjoy doing. Think of the issues you can’t stop talking about and explore those fields.
- Through her education and training, she has traveled to China, Turkey, Russia, Germany, England, Romania, Slovenia, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Venezuela and Belize.
Teen Race Car Driver Makes Miracle Recovery, Thanks Care Team a Year Later

On the one-year anniversary of a life-changing crash, teen race car driver Joshua Jackson returned to El Paso to thank the professionals on his care team — many of whom were TTUHSC El Paso faculty and residents.

In 2015, then 17-year-old Jackson was competing at a racetrack at the Southern New Mexico Speedway in Las Cruces, New Mexico. After being hit by another car, the protective roll cage of Jackson’s car was torn through by a third car, cracking the NASCAR hopeful’s helmet and skull. Jackson, an Albuquerque, New Mexico, resident, had driven the course nearly 40 times and had been in plenty of wrecks, but this one was different. The unconscious teen was airlifted to University Medical Center of El Paso.

“When Joshua arrived at the emergency room, he had exposed brain and a massive scalp laceration. He was in bad shape,” said Paul Livingston, MD, a TTUHSC El Paso emergency medicine resident. “The best decision made that night was the decision by the helicopter team to bring him here.”

Though Jackson lost his left eye and now wears a prosthesis, the teenager is resuming his senior year pain-free and off medications. For his mother, Ginger Jackson, the support of the racing community and hospital was unexpected.

“We had people helping with food, clothes, living arrangements, donations and fundraisers,” she said. The Jackson family temporarily took up residence in El Paso, nearly 300 miles away from their New Mexico home, and received support from as far away as Hawaii and Australia.

“All kinds of things happened that a lot of it I didn’t know until after.”

Despite continuing rehabilitation — regaining movement to his right side and relearning to walk one year after the crash — the champion teen driver with multiple Rookie of the Year awards has plans to return to the racetrack.

Because the Jackson family had prepared for the worst, Joshua’s mother is still left speechless when acknowledging all who were involved in this success story.

“The word thanks isn’t enough, but it’s all we have,” she said.

Watch a video of Joshua Jackson thanking his care team at elpaso.ttuhsc.edu/ia/patient-returns.aspx
TTUHSC El Paso Hosts Texas Tech Foundation Board for the First Time

The Texas Tech Foundation Board of Directors held its first-ever meeting in El Paso June 9-10. The board, which represents the four universities in the TTU System, meets quarterly to provide volunteer leadership to facilitate institutional advancement.

“El Paso is such a dynamic part of the system and the growth has been tremendous, so we brought the foundation board here to celebrate that great growth, as well as Dr. Lange’s [president of TTUHSC El Paso] vision,” said Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement Lisa Calvert.

The board’s visit kicked off with a tour of TTUHSC El Paso, followed by dinner at the home of TTU System Regent Rick Francis and his wife, Ginger Francis. Board members also attended the Lawrence Tyler Francis Grand Lobby dedication at the Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing. The lobby is named in honor of the Francis’ son, Tyler Francis, who passed away in 2014.

The visit culminated with board members joining students, staff and faculty, as well as members of the El Paso community, for TTUHSC El Paso’s second annual Texas Tech Night at the Chihuahuas’. TTU System Chancellor Robert Duncan threw the first pitch of the night.

New SGA Cabinet Leads El Paso Campus

The TTUHSC El Paso Student Government Association (SGA) has shifted gears.

Starting May 2016, the organization began representing all students at TTUHSC El Paso – not just those in the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine (PLFSOM). The university has experienced rapid growth in the past year, including the addition of a new Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences and a forthcoming degree in dental medicine. This transformation prompted the SGA to expand its representation.

The first SGA cabinet to take on this new role is rightfully composed of a diverse group of students from each of TTUHSC El Paso’s three schools: the PLFSOM, the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) and the Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing. Eric Vest, a master’s student in the GSBS, leads the SGA as president; fellow GSBS master’s student Alexandria Rivas serves as vice president of communications; Chris Gerzina, a medical student, serves as vice president of operations; and Kharisma James, a nursing student, serves as vice president of finance.

The cabinet’s focus is on building the campus’ involvement in the El Paso community and bringing attention to El Paso’s role in the greater TTU System.
 Underserved West Texas Communities Receive Free Health Education

BY NADIA M. WHITEHEAD

TTUHSC El Paso is the only institution in the state to receive one of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s 45 distance learning grants. The $430,780 grant was awarded to the Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing (GGHSON) to provide distance health education to 10 underserved communities in rural West Texas.

“I grew up in a small town, and I understand what rurality is,” said Associate Professor and Assistant Dean Penny Cooper, DNP, RN, who leads the project. “Rurality impacts poverty and knowledge base, and ultimately health.”

Cooper’s first step will be to determine the unique health education needs of each community. “Whether they need education on street safety, oral health, nutrition, obesity, exercise, chronic disease — we’ll be there to collaborate with them.”

In partnership with University Medical Center of El Paso, the GGHSON will also provide live-streamed Continuing Nursing Education courses to nurses in rural hospitals and medical centers, a requirement that can be challenging for nurses working in isolated settings.

Another program goal is to inspire rural students to pursue careers in health care. As Cooper explained, “The job potentials for many of these communities are [traditionally] limited to prison guards, farmers and border patrol agents.”

The GGHSON project has been endorsed by U.S. Reps. Will Hurd and Beto O’Rourke and Texas Sen. José Rodríguez, as well as community agencies such as the Texas E-Health Alliance and the Workforce Solutions Borderplex.

The program officially launched in fall 2016 with the installation of video conferencing technology at the 10 community sites.

TTUHSC El Paso Infuses $227 Million into El Paso Economy

BY NADIA M. WHITEHEAD

TTUHSC El Paso contributed a total of $227 million to the El Paso economy in 2015, according to a new report by the Hunt Institute for Global Competitiveness.

“This is an exciting time to be a part of TTUHSC El Paso,” said President Richard Lange, MD, MBA. “Our commitment to the border region profoundly impacts the quality of life for residents in our region, and I am proud of the university’s contributions to the economy.”

In this same year, the university also provided $29 million in uncompensated care to address the health needs of El Paso. The Hunt Institute estimates that’s the equivalent of providing $734 worth of medical care to each El Paso County family living below the poverty line.

Lange hopes the university’s impact continues to grow for years to come. “For almost 40 years, we have played a pivotal role in advancing education, research and patient care in the Paso del Norte region, and I look forward to enhancing and expanding services to our community.”
A dental school is coming to the TTU System, and it’s expected to change the face of health care in West Texas.

For years, the western half of the state has suffered from a severe shortage of dentists. El Paso County has just 172 dentists to serve its population of nearly 860,000 residents. Other western counties fare worse. Presidio, Hudspeth and Culberson do not have a single dentist to serve their residents, and Jeff Davis County has only one.

But now, thanks to a $25 million gift, TTUHSC El Paso will reverse this shortfall. By strategically planting a new dental school in the midst of this severely underserved area, the university expects to attract more dentists and dental students to the region.

“By establishing a school here in the heart of the Borderplex, we expect to retain dentists in our area to help fill this gap,” said TTUHSC El Paso President Richard Lange, MD, MBA.

There has not been a new dental school in Texas in nearly 50 years; the last one opened in 1970. Of the three dental schools currently in the state, all are located more than 500 miles away from El Paso — in San Antonio, Houston and Dallas. Together, the three schools graduate some 300 students a year, yet few of their graduates opt to practice in the West Texas region. Between 2006 and 2015, just 2.5 percent of all Texas dental school graduates chose to establish practices in West Texas. That statistic is even bleaker for El Paso, with less than 1 percent taking up practice in the border city.

But when philanthropists Woody and Gayle Hunt got wind of the problem, they were moved to help fix it.

Just six months after learning about the shortage, the Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation issued a momentous announcement. The organization would gift $25 million — the largest in the foundation’s history — to TTUHSC El Paso for the Woody L. Hunt School of Dental Medicine (WLHSODM).

“The generosity of the Hunt family will impact the landscape of our city and the people who live here,” said TTUHSC El Paso Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement Victoria Pineda. “This landmark gift is a testament to the tremendous impact that a few can make by touching the lives of many.”

“We are confident that this dental school will have a significant impact on the Borderplex, the city of El Paso and the surrounding region,” Woody Hunt said. “Our immediate goal is to attract bright medical talent and young men and women who are eager to stay in the area to practice dentistry.”

But the generous pledge won’t just bring dentists; it’s expected to improve the overall health of the citizens of West Texas as well.

Poor oral health is linked to devastating conditions, including stroke, diabetes and cancer; yet less than half of El Paso’s adults visit the dentist at least once a year. Contrastingly, some 60 percent of the U.S. adult population pays a visit to the dentist every year, according to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research.

TTU System Chancellor Robert Duncan believes that it’s an exciting time for TTUHSC El Paso.

“This extraordinary gift strengthens our founding mission to serve the needs of our communities, region and state and adds to Woody and Gayle Hunt’s astounding legacy of philanthropy at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso,” Duncan said.

Lange couldn’t agree more. This momentous gift ensures that “the future of dental health care for the region is as brilliant as a set of newly polished teeth.”

The dental school is expected to welcome its first class of students in 2020.

For more information about the WLHSODM, visit: elpaso.ttuhsce.edu/sodm
JUST
the facts

$9,100
raised by TTUHSC El Paso medical students at the Hearts for Sparks Golf Classic and Sprint for Sparks 5K supports a free health clinic in the underserved Sparks community. Proceeds will help provide basic medical supplies and equipment.

$39,583.80
raised by TTUHSC El Paso employees during the 2016 State Employee Charitable Campaign (SECC). The funds will go to a variety of charitable organizations, such as the Brain Tumor Association and Hispanic Scholarship Fund.

$79.4M
in financial aid awarded to TTUHSC students for the 2015-2016 academic year — 89% of which was loans.*

$969.3M
annual amount TTUHSC generates or sustains in our local economies.*

$1.8M
granted to TTUHSC El Paso by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases for its role in a national consortium studying the digestive disease gastroparesis. The grant will support basic research and clinical trials for gastroparesis treatment options. Other consortium members include Baylor College of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University, Massachusetts General Hospital and the Mayo Clinic.

560K
patient encounters facilitated through TTUHSC clinics and affiliated hospitals.*

*FY 2015