

Baylor brings education, care to Dallas area hard hit by diabetes

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DALLAS - Baylor Health Care System in partnership with the city of Dallas opened a wellness center dedicated to diabetes care and education June 7 in an area where residents are three times more likely to die of diabetes-related complications than in the rest of the city.

“Diabetes is epidemic, and if you look at this population, they’re even more at risk. So, the inspiration was really to put our investment in the people that needed it the most,” said Donna Rice, president of the Diabetes Health and Wellness Institute at Juanita J. Craft Recreation Center.



Education specialist Misty Jones (left) provides information about diabetes prevention and treatment to patient Terry Dotson at the Diabetes Health and Wellness Institute at Juanita J. Craft Recreation Center, a new entity Baylor Health Care System has launched in partnership with the city of Dallas.

(PHOTO/Jessica Acklen)

The institute is focused not only on the prevention of diabetes, but also personalized education of how to deal with the disease.

“Nobody wants to know about diabetes; they want to know about their diabetes. The care really needs to be personalized,” Rice said. “I think that’s going to be our approach and why we’re different.”

The institute provides both a clinic to treat and classes to teach its patients. Complete with a gym, tennis courts, softball courts, a workout room and a full kitchen to instruct learners on healthy dieting, the institute seeks to change the personal habits of its patients.

“If they’re used to eating fried chicken four times a week, we look at the oil they’re using. So they can still fry it, but they may go from Crisco to olive oil,” Rice said. “The goal of each class is to give information, but also to work on that individual.”

The institute also has the ability to broadcast classes throughout the community and outside events, including church services, back to viewers in the recreation center.

“We’re training a person in each church to be one of our staff ‘peer.’ The part that they play is really supporting this individual in their role and looking for ways to bring their messages into their community,” Rice said. “I think the church is really key in changing the behavior here.”

Dallas’ part in the construction of the institute is important in lowering the high numbers of diabetes in the area.

[b8uCEBPt_Sc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8uCEBPt_Sc)

The Diabetes Health and Wellness Institute at Juanita J. Craft Recreation Center in Dallas is dedicated to diabetes care and education. (Baylor Health Care Video)

“Where do you ever see a city and a health system come together? Health systems play a role but we need the community involved and this is a great way to get the community involved in a disease that’s epidemic in this country,” Rice said. “It’s a way for [Dallas] to take a stand.”

Rice also expressed a desire for the recreational center, which already existed in the community prior to institute’s move, to be a “haven” for families.

“Why build something new [when you have] this paradise within the city? It’s kind of like a gem, and I don’t think anybody knows it here,” Rice said. “I think it will be the place to go for the community. There’s something for everybody here, and that’s really neat.”

The recreational center also reflects the community’s culture. Local artists’ work and framed pictures drawn by children in local schools adorned the walls.

As faith-based health care system, Rice feels that Baylor’s role in the community is important and eventually will lead to improving community’s conditions.

“I think Baylor has been very, very generous. I just see the great work they have done,” Rice said. “I think they saw this as an opportunity to really impact an impoverished area. It’s not only the level of healthcare, but its economic development. I think Baylor being an anchor here may draw opportunity for other investors, grocery stores, or pharmacy chains or

whatever, to come into the community.”

Rice hopes the success of this center will lead to a new way of combating diabetes in the future.

“I think they want to see how this model works, but I think this is the future model, and we will be seeing models like this throughout the U.S.,” Rice said.