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Scouts page 16



Bellaire Police Officer Juanita Sandoval.

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See Detective page 9

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# SOUTHWEST

December 30, 2014

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## Elrod Elementary's Mobile Clinic Brings Health Care to an Underserved Community

By Michelle Leigh Smith

Kathy Flood, Elrod Elementary's school nurse, quotes Taylor Swift's song, "Mean," with the lyrics, "Why do you have to be so

Asthma and obesity are among the top two problems she encounters every day. Elrod has embraced Project Fit and has received a grant that includes new playground

Maplewood resident Bruce Krewinghaus noticed Flood's outstanding work along with the compelling needs of the students and helped initiate Houston Independent School District's first part-time clinic.

"Elrod serves many low income families," he says. "The teachers and staff work hard to give their students a chance for a better life. The clinic shows that the broader community cares about these kids."

The school nurse at Elrod begins her day teaching portion control, and combines music with healthful eating habits and reminders to drink more water. "The clinic, with its emphasis on potential obesity issues, reinforces this," Krewinghaus says. "By providing convenient health care it should avoid costly trips to an emergency center."

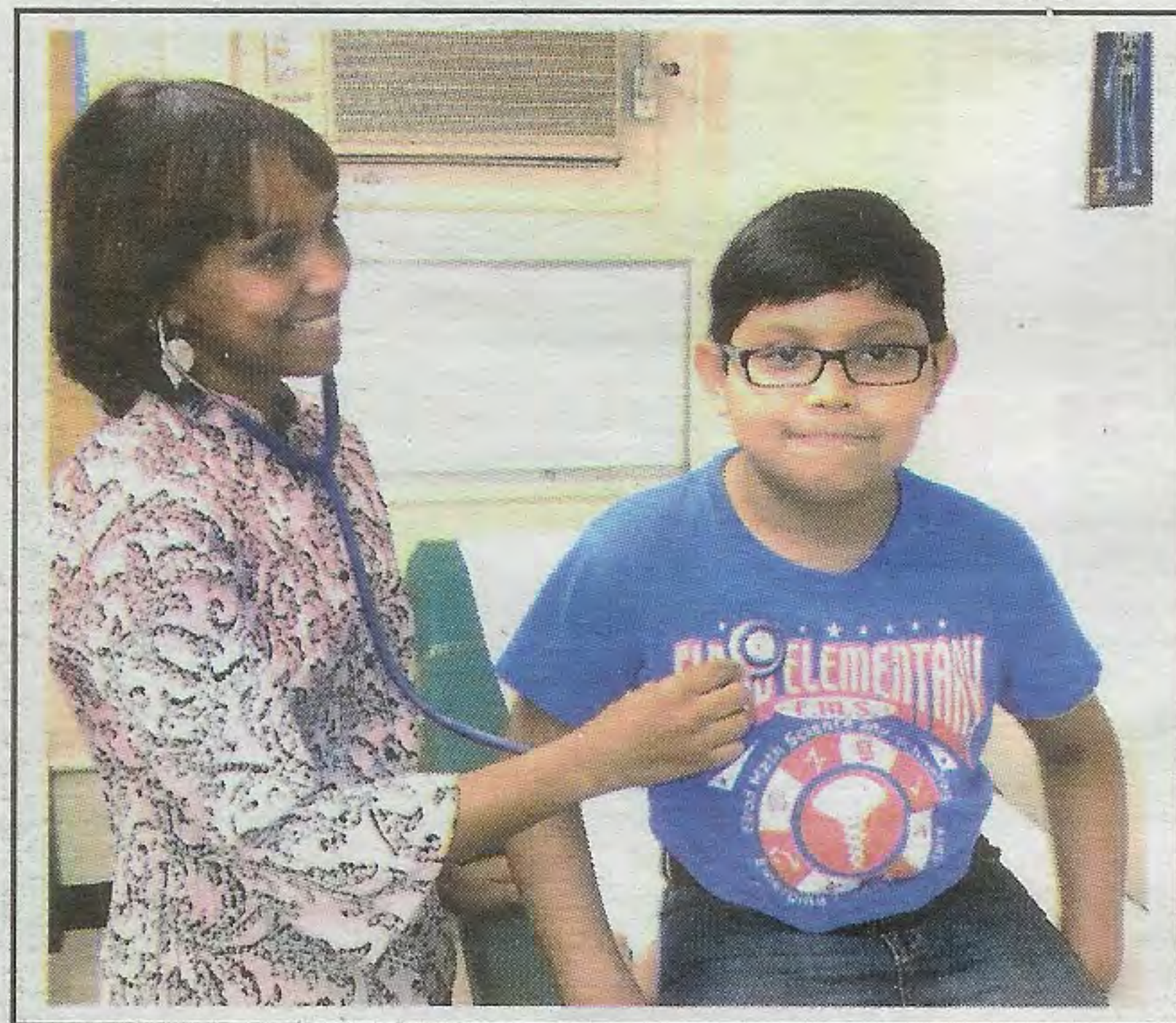
"The Elrod location is the first for Memorial Southwest that is not a full time clinic," Krewinghaus says. "I pushed hard to not wait until they

could justify a full time clinic. This made it possible to help these kids now. The families with students at Elrod have embraced the clinic, and usage has rapidly increased.

"I am proud of the leadership shown by Memorial Southwest Hospital, Mrs. Flood and the principal, Ms. Bellard," says Krewinghaus. "They have built on this to make Elrod an emerging medical scholars magnet."

Experience has proven him right. Jorge, a third grader was sent to the clinic by the school nurse with an acute asthma exacerbation. "Previously, his mother had taken him to the ER each time his asthma 'attacked' him because she had no insurance," says Carol Paret, Chief Community Benefits Officer for Memorial Hermann Health Centers for Schools. "In the previous year, Jorge had 15 asthma-related absences, three ER visits and four hospitalizations. At his first clinic visit,

See Elrod page 16



A nurse helps an Elrod student at the mobile clinic.

mean?" when she's talking to her young students about signs of abuse.

"Our whole thrust is health and medical education because we believe healthy kids will be the best learners," Flood says.

equipment designed for muscle strengthening and endurance training. Coach Houston Posey is thrilled with the additions, and said he will be formally trained next week on the new equipment.



## Elrod from page 1

Jorge received a steroid shot and two nebulizer treatments. Next, Jorge and his mom returned to the clinic for his first annual asthma plan and flu shot. From now until he is 18, he may come back to the clinic for his asthma plan, school and home rescue inhalers, a flu shot and adjustment of his peak flow zones. Since receiving care at the Elrod Clinic, Jorge has had no asthma related absences, ER visits or hospitalizations."

Flood agrees, "Asthma is completely treatable and you can live a healthy life. We talk about famous athletes who live with asthma and how they take care of themselves," Flood says. She teaches the Open Airways program with the American Lung Association and has a pulse oximeter on her desk, at the ready for the inevitable visits from children each day who have asthma issues. When needed, she refers them to the Memorial Hermann Clinic on the school site.

"Elrod is an Emerging Medical Scholars Magnet – the clinic is a partnership with Memorial Hermann for a neighborhood clinic," says Sheleah Reed with HISD. "Students are referred to the clinic after seeing the school nurse. It is mostly for prescriptions, immunizations and physicals, cholesterol screenings. There is a dieti-

cian and it is there for parent education. They serve a diverse population and a multi-lingual program works closely with the school."

"Schools are the lifeblood for the community and a partnership like this brings many resources to a place people trust," says Reed. "We'll never be able to measure its true impact."

Opened in Feb. 2013, Memorial Hermann Elrod Health Center resides in the Fondren Southwest community. The area is heavily populated by families living in older apartment complexes originally designed for young professional adults. Today, the complexes house many poor families from diverse cultures. Apartment owners change often.

The Memorial Hermann Elrod Health Center is open Mondays and Wednesdays, 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m., and Fridays, 7:30 a.m. – noon. It serves only children attending Elrod Elementary School and their siblings, ages 2-19 years old. It operates on a Department of State Health Services for school-based health care grant in partnership with the Houston Independent School District. Memorial Hermann Health System has a contract to provide these services to HISD and the clinic is run with the same standard of care as all Memorial Hermann health care programs.

Memorial Hermann Elrod Health Center is staffed by Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Hiji Washington and Licensed Vocational Nurse Maria Ticas Alcala with physician oversight and support from various Memorial Hermann healthcare staff such as social workers, registered dietitians, and certified community health workers.

Dental services are performed by referrals to the center's dental van at Sharpstown, staffed by a dentist and dental assistants. Memorial Hermann Hospitals support the pharmaceutical needs of the health centers, and Memorial Hermann Outreach Lab supports the lab testing needs.

"Thanks to the strong partnership we have with our local school districts, Memorial Hermann Health System is able to have an amazing impact on the lives of thousands of children in our community," said Chief Community Benefits Officer Carol Paret.

"The connection between health and education is clear. Children, who feel well, are better prepared to attend class, sit, listen, and learn. Their future is brighter."

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