



FORT WORTH

Free clinics head to Fort Worth's 76104 after newspaper series on health disparities

BY NICHOLE MANNA

MARCH 11, 2021 05:45 AM



Marcus Graves grew up with a single mother in the Southside of Fort Worth. He was in the eighth grade when a school nurse told him he had high blood pressure, and at 40, a stroke nearly killed him and left him paralyzed on the right side of his body. BY [YFFY YOSSIFOR](#)



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FORT WORTH

A free pop-up clinic is scheduled to serve residents of the 76104 ZIP code after a Fort Worth Star-Telegram series exposed the health disparities residents in three neighborhoods face. It is one of many free pop-up clinics that will be in the area over

the next year, organizers said.

The clinic will be in operation from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. March 20 at Evans Avenue Plaza, [1050 Evans Ave.](#) It will be open to the first 100 people.

The Star-Telegram series, titled “[Life & Death in 76104](#),” chronicled life in three neighborhoods south of downtown Fort Worth — Historic Southside, Morningside and Hillside. The series was sparked by a [2019 UT Southwestern study](#) that found residents of the 76104 ZIP code have the [lowest life expectancy rate in the state](#).

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On average, people who live in the ZIP code won't live to see their 67th birthday and will die 12 years younger than the national average, according to the study. Women in 76104 live on average to be 70 while men live to be 63.7.

Many factors drive the inequity in the mostly Black and Hispanic neighborhoods, including a [lack of access to jobs and groceries](#). Access to health care is one of the most glaring disparities. Though the ZIP code is in the shadow of Fort Worth's medical district, prompt health care [remains out of reach for many residents](#) because of poor transportation and high cost.

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There are no clinics or pharmacies in the three neighborhoods.

After the series ran, council member Kelly Allen Gray met with the Mercy Clinic, [800 W. Berry St.](#), to facilitate health care services to those who need it. The effort will continue throughout this year and 2022.

The clinic on March 20 will offer diabetes and blood pressure screening, COVID-19 testing, [information on Mercy Clinic](#) and information on SNAP resources. It will help residents register for the COVID-19 vaccine. And, if someone is found to have a health need beyond the clinic, medical professionals there will determine if the person is eligible for services through [John Peter Smith Hospital Connection](#) or schedule a follow-up appointment at Mercy Clinic.

Representatives from [Tarrant Area Food Bank](#) will also be there to distribute food boxes.

Gray said the team has used social media to get the word out. On Monday, residents will begin to receive robocalls. Fliers will be handed out this weekend to residents and Mercy Clinic will hand out fliers on their campus. Gray said information has also been sent to churches in 76104 so pastors can disseminate that to their congregations.

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The [pop-up clinic](#) was organized by Gray, Mercy Clinic's Executive Director Peggy Leitch and Monti Shabout, who described herself in an interview as a "lifelong Fort Worth resident and somebody who has a long standing interest in doing something to better the community we live in."

Later she said: "My husband is a physician and we read the article and identified that area as a place where we could make an impact. The way things have just fallen into place, there's just something really magical about it."

Shabout contacted Gray and through some research found the Mercy Clinic, which provides free services to residents of the 76110 ZIP code, which is directly west of 76104.

The women met with doctors, talked with [JPS Chief Executive Officer](#) Robert Early and eventually a plan began.

Their long-term goal would be to have one building central to the neighborhoods that would provide residents with health care, a pharmacy and food services.

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The Historic Southside, Hillside, Morningside neighborhoods in the 76104 ZIP code have the lowest life expectancy in Texas, according to a UT Southwestern study. Residents, on average, don't live to see their 67th birthday. YFFY YOSSFIFOR YYOSSFIFOR@STAR-TELEGRAM.COM



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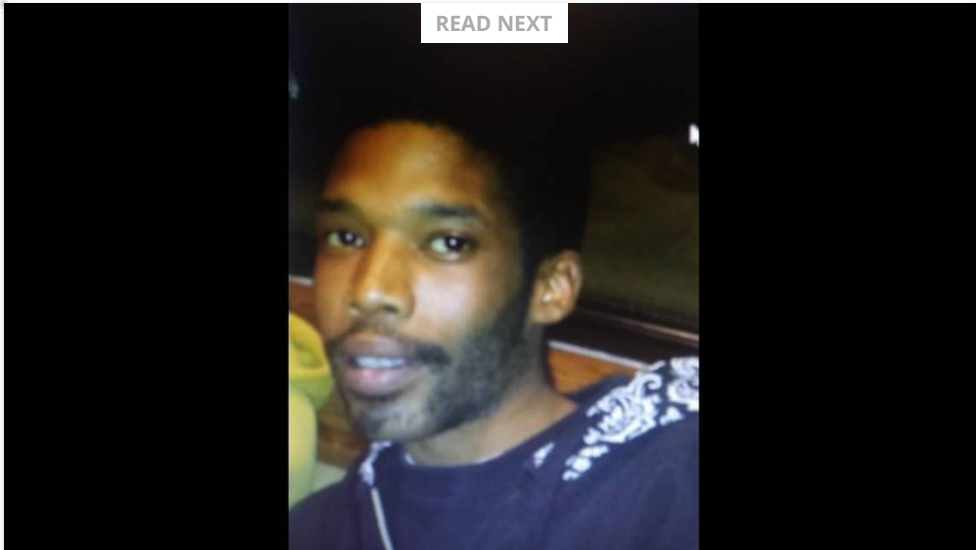
Nichole Manna is an award-winning investigative reporter for the Star-Telegram focusing on criminal justice, civil rights and healthcare. Before moving to Fort Worth in July 2018, she was a reporter at newspapers in Tennessee, North Carolina, Nebraska and Kansas. She likes to spend time with her two dogs, a dachshund named Opie and a three-legged terrier named Oliver. Want something investigated? Send me news tips to nmanna@star-telegram.com or 817-390-7684.



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BY NICHOLE MANNA

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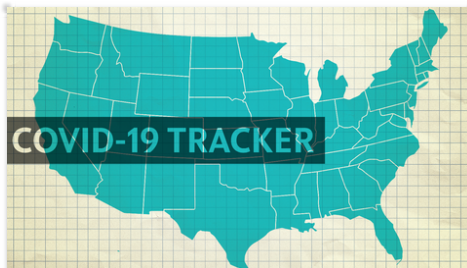
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