



Photos by Matthew Busch / Contributor

From left, Emily Zermeno, Alyssa Villarreal and Jasmine Alvarez learn how to perform CPR during a medical training day put on by students from UIW's School of Osteopathic Medicine at Southside High School on Wednesday.

UIW medical students offer hands-on lessons at Southside

By Liz Teitz
STAFF WRITER

Iris Jimenez leaned over a table in the Southside High School library and carefully drove a curved needle through a raw turkey breast.

Under the watchful eye of Krystal Kwong, Jimenez wrapped the nylon suture twice around her purple-gloved fingers, looping them to tie a knot and complete the stitch.

"Now we're going to make a second stitch," said Kwong, a second-year student at University of the Incarnate Word's School of Osteopathic Medicine. She pointed to the cut in the meat, showing Southside students Jimenez and Clarissa Guevara where to place the needle again to avoid leaving a jagged scar.

Kwong and more than two dozen of her UIW classmates turned the school library into mock-doctor's offices for "Mini D.O. Day" on Wednesday, a chance for the high school students to learn about osteopathic medicine and about pursuing health careers.

Members of the university chapter of the Student Osteo-



Nadia Nayar, a second-year medical student at UIW's School of Osteopathic Medicine, talks about her own barriers during a medical training day put on by the school's students.

pathic Medical Association, or SOMA, led workshops including CPR, art in medicine and women's health, along with conversations about overcoming barriers and achieving goals.

A partnership started in 2017 between the medical school and Southside ISD aims to improve poor health outcomes and address chronic health issues in

the area, which occur at higher rates than the rest of Bexar County and statewide.

Wednesday's grant-funded event was designed to forge relationships with high school students in the district's Career and Technical Education program, said Kayla Floyd, president of the SOMA chapter. "I think the students really learned some

things about medical school," she said afterward.

"We're here to talk about reflexes," said Matthew Coston, swinging a small hammer between his thumb and forefinger. He showed a small group how to find the tendons on their knees, and how to tap them with the hammer to test muscle reflexes. *D.O. Day continues on A4*

Sex trafficking victims get place to heal

By Melissa Fletcher
Stoeltje
STAFF WRITER

The underage victims of sex trafficking in San Antonio now have a new place to heal and overcome their trauma, thanks to a partnership between Roy Maas Youth Alternatives and a number of local donors.

La Puerta Emergency Shelter — *puerta* means door in Spanish — has opened on a busy street on the North Side, adding to RYMA's existing complex of shelters and services for homeless, runaway and abused or neglected youths.

La Puerta, which encompasses 8,000 square feet, has 16 beds and a host of services for people ages 5 to 17 who've either been sex-trafficked, are suspected of being trafficked or are at risk of being bought and sold for sex, said Julie Strentzsch, RYMA's chief program officer.

"They can stay up to 90 days at the state-licensed facility while the staff works to either safely reunify them with families or have them placed in long-term care through Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

"These kids need time to

reacclimate to the idea of re-joining humanity," she said. "They've been so traumatized that they just need some structure and some time to just be a kid again."

La Puerta has a family room, a common room with couches and chairs, a spacious dining

room and an onsite charter school, where young clients can catch up.

"Many of these youth have fallen way behind in their education," said Lisa Brothers, RYMA spokeswoman.

In Texas, at any one time an estimated 79,000 youths are

being exploited for sex, a study conducted by the University of Texas at Austin found. Many never are rescued because so few cry out to police or other authorities for help.

An evolving approach in Bexar County and elsewhere in Texas *Shelter continues on A4*



Kin Man Hui / Staff photographer

Dignitaries observe a ribbon-cutting as Roy Maas Youth Alternatives opens an emergency shelter for the underage victims of sex trafficking.

'Blue water' vets win benefits appeal

By Bill Lambrecht
WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON - Navy Vietnam veterans elated by a federal appeals court ruling that they say rights a 50-year-old wrong descended on Capitol Hill on Wednesday, pressing Congress to expand benefits to more service members suffering from illnesses associated with Agent Orange.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit on Tuesday ruled overwhelmingly for so-called Blue Water Navy veterans, concluding that they are entitled to the disability benefits that Congress intended for them in the Agent Orange Act in 1991.

The government has routinely denied those benefits, requiring proof that service members had boots on the ground in Vietnam or operated along an inland waterway. The ruling will affect an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 Navy veterans.

Now the veterans want legislation that will require the Department of Veterans Affairs to award benefits for veterans who were stationed in Guam, South Korea, the Philippines and other military installations where dangerous herbicides were used as defoliants.

"We kicked some VA butt," said John Wells, a former Navy commander who represented the sailor who won the case. "We are moving like greased lightning."

Tuesday's 9-2 decision reverses that administrative decision, benefiting an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 veterans who served offshore in Vietnam.

Writing for the majority, Judge Kimberly Moore said that all available international law includes coastal waters when referring to the Republic of Vietnam.

"By using the formal term 'Republic of Vietnam,' Congress unambiguously referred ... to both its landmass and its territorial sea," she said. *Sailors continues on A5*

New pleas to Trump over stalled Harvey funding

By Jeremy Wallace
AUSTIN BUREAU

More than \$4 billion that was supposed help low-income and moderate-income Texans improve their Hurricane-Harvey-damaged homes is mired in bureaucratic red tape with little hope of getting to the state in time for the next storm season, which starts in June.

The state has been waiting for almost a year for the money, and some state officials like Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush are fed up and calling on President Donald Trump to intervene.

"This continued delay is resulting in homeowner distress, community degradation and increased costs to the federal government due to subsequent damaging events," Bush said in a letter to Trump on Wednesday. "This is unacceptable."

Bush also told Trump that by not moving quicker the "federal bureaucracy is slowing recovery in Texas" from Harvey.

The money is intended for mitigation work to better prepare homes and neighborhoods against future storms like Harvey. That could include raising homes higher or improving drainage in neighborhoods notorious for flooding.

Bush said the problem is somewhere between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Office of Management and *Harvey continues on A5*

METRO

SHELTER

From page A3

as treats minors caught up in sex trafficking as victims, not prostitutes. Facilities like La Puerta and Centro Seguro — a 24-hour drop-in center run by RMYA and located next to the new shelter — are aimed at keeping them out of the criminal juvenile justice system.

Debbie Solcher, who works on a special child sex trafficking team created by Gov. Greg Abbott, said the state recently approved \$18 million that will go to local and state initiatives to address underage sexual exploitation.

The Kronkosky Charitable Foundation and Impact San Antonio are among the local nonprofits that contributed to the new facility, which Strentzsch estimated would fill up quickly upon opening. A final inspection by the state will take place soon, said RY-MA CEO Bill Wilkinson.

Centro Seguro, which offers runaway and homeless youth food, showers, counseling and other services, has served almost 300 young clients since opening in October 2017.

Various officials spoke Wednesday, but perhaps the most poignant words came from Allison Franklin, an adult survivor of child sex trafficking who drove from her home in Kyle.

Franklin, 34, who ran away from home at age 11, ended up being kidnapped by gang members in Houston and trafficked for sex for decades. She became a drug addict and spent multiple stints in prison for various crimes.

Today, she's working toward a bachelor's degree at UT-Austin and is a policy fellow with the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, a nonprofit that works on justice policies.

"If I'd had a place like this, my life would have been different," she said. La Puerta "gives kids an amazing opportunity to start identifying with their futures, rather than the past. They can get at the root causes of their trauma."

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New Braunfels temporarily bans e-scooters

By Caleb Downs
STAFF WRITER

New Braunfels police Wednesday issued a 90-day ban on commercial electric scooters in the city and will cite anyone caught using one with a Class C misdemeanor, officials announced.

The temporary order was issued by Assistant Chief of Police Joe Vargas in an effort to address the scooter issue through "proper channels of city government," according to a statement from David Ferguson, the communications coordinator for the city of New Braunfels.

"We understand it's a national trend, but the reason behind this is getting something down on the books from City Council and figuring out what the city wants to do about (the scooter companies) should they locate here," Ferguson said.

The ban applies to the commercial use of "electric motorized scooters on public streets, sidewalks and rights-of-way inside the incorporated city limits."

"Under the temporary order, officers with the New Braunfels Police Department will be able to cite those using motorized scooters if they were acquired through a commercial business (shared mobility service) and if they are being used on public streets or sidewalks," Ferguson said in a statement. "Each citation is the equivalent of a Class C Misdemeanor with a fine not to exceed \$500."

Before Wednesday's ban, at least one scooter company, whom Ferguson declined to name, conducted a test run in New Braunfels and then removed all the scooters from the city. No scooter companies currently operate there.

New Braunfels' municipal code allows the chief of police to make "regulations necessary to make and enforce temporary or experimental regulations to cover emergencies or special conditions."

Because Tom Wibert, New Braunfels' current chief of police, is on medical leave, the responsibility fell to Vargas.

New Braunfels isn't the only Central Texas city taking a closer look at policies surrounding electric scooters.

The San Antonio City Council last year approved a six-month pilot program for scooter regulations, then watched as scooter use "exploded" to a level that "compromises" safety, sidewalk traffic and cleanliness, officials said.

Citing the unexpected growth in the vehicles' popularity, Mayor Ron Nirenberg on Tuesday ex-

pressed support for even more regulation. The City Council will consider tighter regulations and more oversight for the electric vehicles Feb. 14.

"Pedestrian safety must be our top priority," Nirenberg said. "While I remain committed to nurturing innovative transportation solutions, we must institute best practices to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for everyone using city streets and sidewalks."

In Kirby, the City Council directed the city attorney to draft an ordinance banning the electric scooters from all 118 streets of the suburb.

"We didn't take a formal vote yet," Kirby council member Mike Grant said. "But there is consensus among us all that we have to get in front of this issue and not allow ourselves to be like downtown San Antonio."

D.O. DAY

From page A3

before asking them to try it on himself and three other medical students.

Across the room, students outlined the differences between doctors of osteopathy, or D.O.'s, and medical doctors, or M.D.'s. They demonstrated osteopathic manipulative treatment, showing ways to treat carpal tunnel syndrome and ease neck pain.

At another station, students were urged to reflect on "what's going to stand in your way, and how are you going to keep those from standing in your way?" In conversations throughout the afternoon, some high schoolers asked about choosing specialties and majors. Others saw a chance to ask for advice on studying for difficult classes.

The district's health careers program has grown tremendously over the past 2½ years, Southside High CTE Coordinator Lynn Hernandez said. In addition to their science classes, students can earn certifications in phlebotomy, patient care technician, pharmacy technician, medical billing and



Matthew Busch / Contributor

Southside High School students learn the basics of CPR during a medical training day put on by students from UIW's School of Osteopathic Medicine on Wednesday.

coding technician.

Conversations with the medical students who are "living the dream you want to live" can help "kill the fear of the unknown" and help those still in high school see what's possible, she said.

"My dad has cancer, and I'm interested in being an oncologist," student Marti Montalvo said.

"These are good people to look up to, they're so confident and smart. It's nice to know other people seeking the same future."

Coston said these outreach efforts tie back to the mission of UIW's osteopathic medicine school.

"Hopefully I'm able to show some students that not all doctors

"Hopefully I'm able to show some students that not all doctors necessarily fit a certain mold."

Matthew Coston, UIW's School of Osteopathic Medicine

necessarily fit a certain mold," he said. The group that led the workshops is made up of "a wide array of all different genders, ethnicities and backgrounds," who can be models for students who might not have seen many doctors who look like themselves.

"It made me feel like I have a chance," said Susanna Paredes, an aspiring dentist who said she's now also considering a career in medicine. Talking with one of the UIW students who had struggled in some of his science classes but was able to work through them made it seem achievable, she said.

After listening to the UIW students, "you get inspired," Paredes said. In the future, "I want to show other kids and I want to be able to do that for someone else."



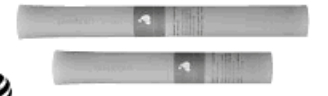
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