



[Comments](#) 11 | [Recommend](#) 0

# Baylor Diabetes Health and Wellness Institute to open in South Dallas next year

05:47 PM CDT on Tuesday, September 22, 2009

By ROY APPLETON and DIANNE SOLIS

[rappleton@dallasnews.com](mailto:rappleton@dallasnews.com)

[dsolis@dallasnews.com](mailto:dsolis@dallasnews.com)

The diagnosis of diabetes is accelerating across the nation, most commonly afflicting African-Americans and Latinos.

With those realities in mind, Baylor Health Care System is confronting the disease in a core spot — South Dallas.

Hospital and city officials joined neighborhood leaders Tuesday morning at Juanita Craft Recreation Center for a ceremonial ground-breaking of what they hope will be a model for diabetes care.

The center at 4500 Spring Ave. will become home next year to Baylor's Diabetes Health and Wellness Institute — an initiative involving both treatment and prevention with a goal of improving lives and reducing health care costs.

“Instead of treating the disease in our hospitals, we want to deal with it in the neighborhoods,” said Dr. Paul Convery, chief medical officer of the Baylor system.

Rev. Henry Green Jr. attended Monday's groundbreaking event. He presides over the red-brick Community Outreach Baptist Church, across the street from the recreation center. He knows diabetes well. The lanky 62-year-old was diagnosed seven years ago and is planning to work closely with the Baylor initiative.

Even with health insurance, the preacher found it difficult to find a good diabetes education program near his home, he said.

That won't be the case with a center in the middle of south Dallas.

“With this place here, I can see a lot of us not losing our legs, not losing our eyesight, not losing our lives because of diabetes,” he said. “I applaud Baylor for making a bold statement.”

Placing a diabetes treatment center in the middle of a neighborhood means folks are more likely to come to get services, he said. “It fits into the neighborhood. It is the same old place with a new idea.”

Through education, the preacher became the “poster child” for the diabetes education cause, he said. “I went from insulin to three types of medicine to two types of medicine,” he said. “And then to diet

and exercise. I did all those kinds of things because I had access to education. Ninety percent of people don't have access so they don't have success."

The institute will offer a clinic staffed by doctors and other medical specialists, affordable medications, plus diabetes education ranging from nutrition and cooking classes to exercise programs.

Exercise and the consumption of healthy foods can help prevent or manage diabetes, among the mostly costly and deadly chronic diseases.

The Juanita Craft center will still offer its regular services and will be expanded for the institute. The city is contributing \$2 million toward that work with Baylor paying \$15 million for construction, equipping and staffing the institute for four years, Convery said.

The institute will be open to all regardless of residency, insurance or income. "We won't turn anyone away," he said.

South Dallas was selected because of its predominantly African-American population that is relatively poor, medically underserved and has limited access to healthy food, he said.

"It was considered the least healthy area of Dallas County," he said.

Nationwide, 6 percent of the population was diagnosed with diabetes in 2006, up from about 3 percent in 1997, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. And in Texas, diabetes rates are highest among African-Americans (12.9 percent) and Latinos (12.3 percent) compared to Anglos (8.5 percent), according to the Texas Diabetes Council.