



Tarrant County: Our North Texas Home



*Tarrant County Judge
B. Glen Whitley*

A NEW PROGRAM TO HELP KIDS BEAT ASTHMA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS GET ON BOARD

The kids are heading back to school.

It always seems early for that because it's so hot in August.

But it's never too early to see what we can do to protect those same kids from asthma.

We have developed an innovative school-based asthma

program in Tarrant County to reduce absenteeism and improve the health of our students.

The program is called Asthma 411 and it is needed.

Health experts say up to 25 percent of children between the ages of six and nine in Tarrant County may have asthma.

Asthma compromises success at school and puts students at risk of hospitalization.

Our Asthma 411 program will reduce emergency room visits, lower absenteeism and help identify undiagnosed students who need treatment.

Tarrant County school districts that join the program, and many have, get their schools outfitted with asthma medication and supplies at no cost and training is available for school nurses.

The school-based program provides immediate care and makes it possible for students to return to class the same day once their asthma is under control.

Asthma is the real deal when a short-of-breath child scrambles into a nurse's office and a 911 call is placed,

because the next stop may be a hospital.

A two-year Asthma 411 pilot project at two Fort Worth schools found that the program served about two dozen students each year at each of the schools and reduced absenteeism.

Asthma 411 is a collaborative effort of the UNT Health Science Center, the Cook

Children's Medical Center, the JPS Health Network and the County Judge's office.

Cook Children's Medical Center is paying for all equipment, medication and supplies for school districts and training the school nurses. JPS will help school districts connect with physicians to write standing orders for asthma treatment.

The Tarrant County program is modeled after a similar program developed in St. Louis more than a decade ago by Dr. David Sterling, an asthma expert and researcher who is now a UNT Health Science Center public health professor.

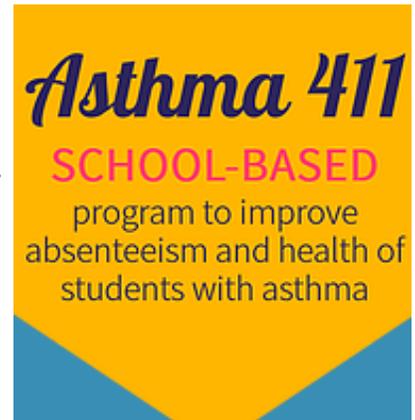
Three local school districts, recognizing the asthma problem before we launched Asthma 411, already have established asthma programs in their schools.

Asthma 411 is an impressive, cost-effective approach to addressing a significant pediatric health issue in Tarrant County. It will help students, parents and school nurses breathe easier.

It has been rewarding to see such a positive response from our Tarrant County school districts.

There are some simple, common sense activities to help prevent asthma and protect our children, like not idling vehicles in front of schools. Second-hand cigarette smoke and even air fresheners can be irritants. It's important to clean air conditioning filters, regulate humidity and watch for mold and mildew.

To help our children improve their health it will take a partnership, a collaborative effort of physicians, parents, students, schools, hospitals and community resources. Let's step up for the sake of our children's health and the next generation.



TAMING TRAFFIC

Fixing Freeway Performance in Southeast Tarrant County



The tangled web of freeways in southeast Tarrant County, a legacy of the old North Texas highway system, a lake, and the first high-speed roads built in the county, is going to get fixed.

The Southeast Connector, a modern interchange, will replace the tangled web of Interstate 20, U.S. 287 and Loop 820 in a few years.

“The Southeast Connector project incorporates three interchanges into one, providing vital connectivity in Southeast Tarrant County,” said Loyl Bussell, the Texas Department of Transportation acting Fort Worth district engineer.

TxDOT is doing a study that includes a preliminary interchange design and an environmental assessment of the proposed improvements.

Loop 820 from Meadowbrook Drive

south to I-20 would be rebuilt, as would I-20 from Forest Hill Drive east to Kelly Elliot Road.

Improvements on U.S. 287, which travels diagonally to the southeast corner of the county from downtown Fort Worth to Mansfield, will start just south of Miller Avenue and continue to Sublett Road in south Arlington. That road was interrupted in the late 1950s by the creation of Lake Arlington and traffic was rerouted onto Loop 820 and I-20.

Proposed improvements to be evaluated include additional main lanes, a reversible barrier that separates express or managed lanes, entrance and exit ramp adjustments, frontage road intersection improvements as well as bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

TxDOT will hold public meetings and a public hearing to gather input from citizens, schools, chambers of commerce, agencies and representatives of local governments.

Information collected at the public meetings and the hearing will be used to develop safe transportation solutions that minimize impact on the community and move traffic more efficiently, TxDOT officials said.



Commissioner Roy Charles Brooks Elected NACo President

Tarrant County Commissioner Roy Charles Brooks is the newly elected president of the National Association of Counties.

Brooks was sworn in as association president for a one-year term on July 24 at NACo’s annual conference and expo in Columbus, Ohio.

As president of the national organization, Brooks said that he endeavors to be an advocate for Tarrant County and all the counties across the nation.

Brooks said that he wants to give the people of Tarrant County and other counties a voice at the table when Washington legislators and agency officials draft policies and write laws.

“I want to put the focus on real needs of real people living in America’s counties,” Brooks said.

Brooks, active in NACo since 1991, has a presidential initiative that focuses on the role that counties can play in breaking multi-generational cycles of poverty, with a special focus on children and early childhood development.



Tarrant County Commissioner Roy Charles Brooks
New NACo President

NACo works in the interest of the more than 3,000 counties across America on both urban and rural issues such as justice and public safety, transportation, agriculture, health, telecommunications and technology, environment and land use, human services and education, community and economic development and the incarceration of mentally ill persons in jails.

More than 1,500 county officials and guests attended the conference in Franklin County.

Brooks has represented Precinct One on the Tarrant County Commissioners Court since 2005.

Precinct One is made up of the county’s southwestern quadrant with an arm extending eastward across downtown Fort Worth and north of Arlington to the Dallas County border.

It is the second time this decade that a member of the Tarrant County Commissioners Court has led the national county organization. In 2010-2011, Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley served as NACo president.

Tarrant County is the only county with a NACo president and former president serving together on a county governing board.

