



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Beth Phillips, Bloom Communications
beth@bloom-comm.com
(806) 252-0055

Shahreen Abedin, Dell Medical School
Shahreen.Abedin@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 495-5062

The Housing Authority of the City of Austin Partners with Dell Medical School to Advance Health for Low-Income Residents in East Austin

HACA will use a \$315,000 St. David's Foundation grant to implement a community health pilot program

Austin, Texas (Dec. 17, 2018) – Chronic disease disproportionately affects low-income populations. A recent survey of residents at the [Housing Authority of the City of Austin's](#) (HACA) largest subsidized housing property found 76 percent reported one or more chronic diseases, and also had low levels of literacy. To help address these challenges, HACA is partnering with [Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin](#) to launch the Health Catalyst Pilot Program. The program will serve over 200 low-income families and individuals living at the Pathways at Booker T. Washington Terraces in East Austin.

The community health pilot program is funded by a two-year \$315,000 “Health Starts at Home” grant awarded by the St. David’s Foundation, with additional commitments of more than \$75,000 from HACA and Dell Med. The “Health Starts at Home” grant is the largest philanthropic grant HACA has ever received.

“We are thrilled to combine forces with Dell Medical School to understand and address the diverse health needs of our families,” said HACA Executive Vice President Sylvia Blanco. “We want our residents to know that HACA is more than just a landlord – we care about their daily life experience and state of health and well-being. We want to help them thrive and this pilot program will allow us to do that at Booker T. Washington – one family at a time.”

Earlier this year, HACA enlisted the help of residents, Dell Med and Family Eldercare to administer a first Community Health Needs Assessment that reached a diverse group of participants. More than 500 residents across three HACA properties participated and surveys were conducted in about eight languages. HACA is learning that the Booker T. Washington community faces serious health challenges like 12 percent do not have medical insurance, 76 percent have one or more chronic diseases (i.e., diabetes, mental health issues, chronic pain), and 47 percent visited the emergency room in the past year.

“Health begins at home, so meeting public housing residents’ health needs in their communities is the most effective and efficient way to serve the greatest number of people,” said William Tierney, M.D., Chair of Dell Med’s Department of Population Health and Professor in the Departments of Population Health, Internal Medicine and Oncology.

Residents were the key driver in shaping HACA and Dell Medical School's community health pilot program. For example, 90 percent of Booker T. Washington residents desired on-site health navigation support and 84 percent desired on-site group visits with local health experts. HACA will be able to hire two Community Health Workers to administer door-to-door health assessments and prepare individualized wellness plans for residents to link specific needs with existing social services.

A project coordinator will provide program management support and administer the monthly health group visits and walking groups. In addition, HACA's Health and Wellness Strategic Catalyst, Rodolfo Rodriguez, will direct the program and clinical researchers from Dell Med, led by Freya Spielberg, M.D., MPH, will provide input and work with HACA residents to build an infrastructure to better understand the diverse health needs of low-income families, and ultimately measure improved health outcomes.

In August, the St. David's Foundation released a request for proposals titled, "Health Starts at Home," under its Housing Wrap-Around Services focus area, intended to increase opportunity available to residents of affordable housing communities. Projects funded through the RFP are expected to create the conditions that foster self-sufficiency and/or stabilized health for low-income individuals and families.

"Housing can be a powerful platform for health," said Kim McPherson, Senior Program Officer, St. David's Foundation. "Our goal in this initiative is to test ideas around the importance of social connection, resident voice, and community design in developing on-site services and supports for residents of affordable housing."

Twelve of the nonprofit organizations were awarded grants totaling \$2.6 million. These organizations were recognized for working to improve opportunities available to people living in affordable housing communities across Central Texas by: listening to resident voices, increasing social connection, activating physical spaces, and leveraging existing assets.

About HACA

Established in 1937, HACA is a public unit of government separate from the City of Austin. HACA's mission is to cultivate sustainable affordable housing communities and partnerships that inspire self-reliance, growth and optimism. As a high-performing housing authority that assists over 20,000 Austinites, HACA owns and operates 1,839 units of subsidized housing in 18 developments throughout Austin. For more information, visit www.hacanet.org.

###