

# FRIdays

FERGUSON ROAD INITIATIVE  
SERVING FAR EAST DALLAS

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ISSUE 39

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# Celebrating FRI's Backyard

by Daniel Ortman

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It's a thrill to share news about all the great things to celebrate in FRI's backyard! The Trinity Forest Spine Trail (TFST), which plans to open this Fall, along with the recent completion of White Rock Hills Park and Highland Road, is ensuring all residents along the lower Ferguson Road corridor have access to recreation and green space. In addition to the new paved trail linking the TFST and Santa Fe trails, 8-miles of new trails are planned for mountain bikes adjacent to the TFST with an expected completion date in 2024.

The White Rock East area will celebrate the opening of a new grocery store, El Rio Grande Latin Market, thus providing healthy food options in a former food desert near Buckner Boulevard and John West Road. On the horizon, is a possible Senior Activity Center to be established at the Claremont Village Shopping Center at Highland and Ferguson Roads. Our most important advocacy project to date, is ensuring the \$24MM White Rock Hills Recreation Center is placed on the 2024 city Bond Program.

There is much to celebrate and be proud of, but these results are impossible without the support of our community through membership and volunteer efforts. Please help support FRI as we continue to grow and advocate for you.



Forest Hills "Waste Warriors" volunteer at the FRI cleanup

## Thank you to our generous Sponsors of the FRI Operation Beautification Litter Cleanup:

- In Kind Donations:
- Code Compliance
  - Ferguson Donut
  - Impact@Bethel
  - McDonald's
  - Raceway
  - Signage Systems



Thank you to all our volunteers who helped cleanup FRI's backyard!

## FRI: Improving the quality of life where people live & work

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|--|---|
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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parks & Recreation           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coalition Building              |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Property Values              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Issue/Gap Analysis              |

Check the box for FRI:

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Households - \$50  
 Nonprofits - \$100  
 Businesses - Starting at \$100  
 Founder's Circle - Starting at \$1,000  
 email: membership@fergusonroad.org



click the QR code to join FRI

# Strengthening FRI's Backbone: Community Connection Founder's Circle Donor Members

Ferguson Road Initiative Founder's Circle Donor Members are strong supporters of Far East Dallas. They invest heavily in the community and the coalition building work of FRI. They do this by contributing \$1,000+ with a 3-year pledge. They understand that true community transformation requires tenacity, dedication, and persistence over a sustained period. In other words, "sweat equity." Established as a grassroots participatory nonprofit backbone organization in 1998, FRI cut its teeth on crime prevention and improving public safety with remarkable success.

Today, we continue these efforts by working with community leadership and our law enforcement partners. Our activities have expanded to include advocacy, communication, connection, and leadership. Some of the additional support we provide is seen in our ability to guide vision and strategy, convene meetings, build public goodwill and trust, and mobilize resources. These services help our area nonprofits and businesses accelerate their ability to make a positive collective impact in the community.

FRI's work involves an intentional way of working together and sharing information to solve the complex problems in Far East Dallas related to poverty, lack of

education and job skills training. FRI is also working hard to eliminate the food, recreation, and medical deserts in our community. FRI shines the light on the neglect and disparities in our community and identifies partners and resources to fill these gaps. All members and donors of the Ferguson Road Initiative are important to us.

Founder's Circle Donor Members contributions allow us to set a budget for operating expenses and to expand our core revitalization objectives. Because of additional contributions, FRI has been able to hire two new employees. FRI is appreciative of our Founder Circle Donor Members and supporters, and invites other households and organizations to consider increasing their investment in Far East Dallas.



Dr. Mike Walker

When Dr. Mike Walker, Vice Provost Dallas College of Business, Hospitality, and Global Trade, was considering where to channel his interests and resources, he was looking for an organization that he could relate to on a personal level. Growing up in the FRI area was a significant part of

his childhood, that's why he is compelled to support the work of FRI. He attended Hexter Elementary, Hill Junior High, and Bryan Adams High School. "Participating as a Founder's Circle Donor Member provides me the opportunity to help make certain that this unique part of Dallas remains a special place for people to live, raise families, and contribute to the overall well-being of our city."

-Dr. Mike Walker



## Thank you to our 2023 Founder's Circle Donor Members

### \$10,000 a year for 3 years

Access Self Storage  
AmeriSouth  
White Rock Medical Center

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McDonald's

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White Rock Hills  
Townhome Apartments

### \$2,500 a year for 3 years

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Lone Star Credit Union  
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Dr. Eddie Tealer  
Dr. Mike & Mrs. Janice  
Walker  
David Weekley Homes  
White Rock Montessori  
Karl Zavitkovsky



White Rock Montessori's wooded campus

"White Rock Montessori (WRM) became a Founder's Circle Donor Member because we believe in FRI's mission to engage and empower a community of advocates to advance a safe, beautiful, prosperous and proud community in Far East Dallas. WRM has prioritized offering tuition assistance to

families in the 75228 zip code with the hope of providing equitable access to the benefits of a high-quality education based on Montessori principles."

-Connie Laufersky, Director, White Rock Montessori

"Living so close to the Trinity Forest Spine Trail, the White Rock Hills Park, and the new DORBA bike trails, I plan to take full advantage of all the new amenities Far East Dallas has to offer."

Austin Endo, a consultant for Principal Consultant Security Ahead, is a

resident of the newest neighborhood in Far East Dallas, The Grove at White Rock Hills. Austin chose to be a FRI Founder's Circle Member because he wants to play an active role and have a voice in the direction this area is going. Austin makes it clear that he wants to do more than talk about new possibilities, he is willing to invest in his community and the work FRI does. Austin serves on his HOA board, Friends of Creekside, and on the FRI Board of Directors. -Austin Endo, Grove at White Rock Hills Resident



Austin Endo



Gary Hasty

Gary Hasty has been doing real estate development for 25 years. In Far East Dallas he has developed Dorian Townhomes, middle-income housing on Ferguson Road, and Heroes House, housing 31 veterans through the Veteran's Affairs Supportive Housing program.

"I became a Founder's Circle Donor Member and joined the FRI Board because I wanted to support the community of Far East Dallas." -Gary Hasty, President of Karrington Realty

"I have worked with FRI for many years and consider it to be one of Dallas' most effective community-based organizations. Although I am not an East Dallas resident, I support FRI because it is an organizational model that merits replication throughout the City." -Karl Zavitkovsky Economic Development Director, City of Dallas, Retired



Karl Zavitkovsky



Dr. Angela Scheurle

"It's kind of intangible, but the FRI area seems prouder of itself than it used to be," remarks Dr. Angela Scheurle, a geneticist at UTSW and a resident of White Rock Forest. Dr. Scheurle became a Founder's Circle Donor Member over ten

years ago when FRI transitioned from federal funding to a membership program. She first found out about FRI when she attended a Community Connection Townhall Meeting and was supportive of the work they were doing. She has invested in FRI ever since. "What impresses me about the changes in the FRI area is that the area has improved over the years without gentrifying, keeping the flavor of the neighborhood the same." -Dr. Angela Scheurle, White Rock Forest Resident

Holden Green Apartments became Founder's Circle Donor Members because of the track record and vision of FRI.

"We wanted to get involved with the safety and betterment of our neighborhood." -Peace Mi, Owner of Holden Apartments



Holden Green Apartments raised gardens

**FRI FACT:** 75% of all of FRI's revenue comes from community support including memberships, donations, and fundraising campaigns.

# Dallas Off-Road Bicycle Trail in FRI's Backyard

by Sean Laughlin



The Loop Dallas isn't complete yet, but already exciting new projects are coming to East Dallas. The new Trinity Forest Spine Trail (which runs between White Rock Creek and Ferguson Road) opened fifty acres of adjacent forested land. Recent residential

surveys as part of the current Samuell Grand Master Plan rated "mountain bike trails and parks for all ages and skills levels" high on the list of desired recreational activities.

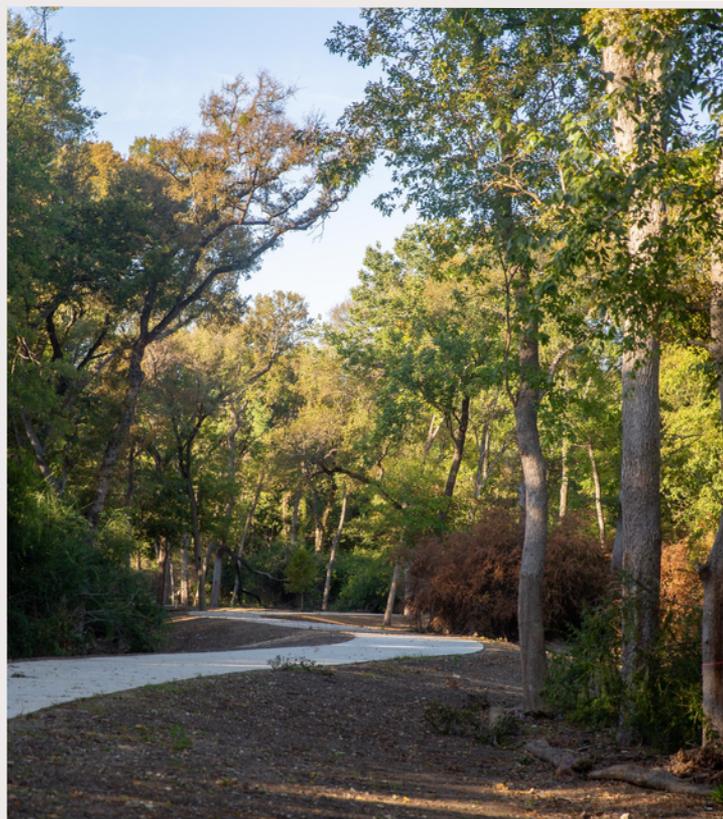
With support from the City of Dallas, The Loop Dallas in partnership with the Dallas Off Road Bicycle Association (DORBA), plan to build a state-of-the-art mountain biking park and trail. "This new mountain bike skills park and trail will be world-class, right here in East Dallas," said Sean Laughlin, DORBA board member. "We've retained one of the best trail design and construction firms in the U.S. and this new trail will be the envy of large cities everywhere."

Philip Hiatt Haigh, Executive Director of The Loop Dallas said, "It's very rare that a city with the population and density of Dallas has fifty acres of 'new' forested land available for a new park. An opportunity like this

deserves a great trail that residents can enjoy".

The plan includes a bike skills park with beginner, intermediate and advanced lanes and various fun and challenging features. In addition, several miles of natural surface, flowing trails will be built through the woods taking advantage of the natural terrain and minimizing disruption of natural resources. The result will be the opportunity for residents to have a nature-filled experience right in Far East Dallas, and less than five miles from downtown Dallas.

"Many Dallas residents who like to ride their bikes on dirt trails are forced to drive to trails outside the city. This new trail, combined with The Loop Dallas, will make it safe and fun for riders to ride right from their house to mountain bike trails," said Laughlin. Mountain biking has been one of the fastest growing outdoor activities in the past several years, especially among families with kids. Once completed, DORBA volunteers will maintain the new trails. DORBA has over 400 volunteers who help maintain, repair, and improve 200+ miles of natural surface trails throughout the Metroplex. The bike park and trail will be funded by a private donor and is expected to be completed by the end of 2024.



THE LOOP  
DALLAS

The first new project needed to complete The Loop Dallas' 50-mile citywide trail network will be open this summer!

With the Trinity Forest Spine Trail, you can connect from Far East Dallas to the Santa Fe Trail, White Rock Lake, and Deep Ellum – completely by trail.



Follow The Loop Dallas for details and updates on the opening!

*The new Creekside Park along the first phase of the Trinity Forest Spine Trail*



From L to R: Councilmember Jesse Moreno (District 2), Councilmember Paula Blackmon (District 9), Councilmember Adam Bazaldua (District 7)

## A letter from your Dallas City Councilmembers...

Dear FRIdays News Magazine neighbor,

If you have found your way here, chances are you are one of our constituents. Over the past two years, we have had the distinct privilege of representing Far East Dallas on Dallas' City Council together. We uniquely understand Ferguson Road's vision and have remained in frequent communication at City Hall to advance many of the Ferguson Road Initiative's projects, such as the grand opening of White Rock Hills Park and the development of the Trinity Forest Spine Trail connecting our districts.

But we are not done yet. **With municipal elections coming up Saturday, May 6, we are asking you to re-elect us for two more years on Dallas' City Council.** And don't forget - you can vote early at any Dallas County Early Voting Center from April 24 to May 2.

We will continue to focus on public safety, quality of life, and other important issues to Far East Dallas residents like improving our streets and funding the construction of White Rock Hills Recreation Center in the City's 2024 Bond program. Most importantly, we want to hear from you. Scan any of our QR codes below to visit our campaign websites and share what issues matter most to you.

Onward - together!



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[www.bazaldua4dallas.com](http://www.bazaldua4dallas.com)

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**Christopher Rebuck,** Bishop Lynch High School, President

**Dr. Eddie Tealer,** Dallas College at Eastfield, President

**Karl Zavitkovsky,** City of Dallas Economic Development, Director, Retired



Scan the QR code to view FRI's Advisory Board

**FRI FACT:** Overall crime decreased an average of **30% YTD 2022 to 2023** in the FRI area. Thanks to the **Dallas Police Department Northeast Division** for their diligent work!



## Starbucks: Serving More than Great Coffee

by Susan Hopper

There's more to a Starbucks Community Store than a great cup of coffee. Last summer Starbucks opened a Community Store in Casa View Shopping Center. They are committed to learning about the needs of the community and how they can help uplift that community.

Before investing in Casa View, Starbucks researched the area and relied on the human development index to determine where to build. The Casa View area demonstrated vulnerability in health, education, and income with 20% of the population below the poverty level. Starbucks chose this area for a community store because they found that Casa View is an ethnically diverse neighborhood and is known for neighbors taking care of each other.

To learn more about the Far East Dallas community, a Starbucks spokesperson said, "We contacted Dallas City Councilmember, Paula Blackmon's office, and she referred us to the Ferguson Road Initiative (FRI). Starbucks relied on FRI to help kickstart our outreach efforts and understand the community better." FRI was able to connect Starbucks with Wilkinson Center, Owenwood Farm & Neighbor Space, St. Vincent

De Paul, and other nonprofit organizations. Starbucks has been working with the Wilkinson Center by hosting an in-store toy drive in December, and an on-going food drive. Store employees also volunteer at Wilkinson Center. Laura Ingram, Engagement Manager at Wilkinson Center is thrilled when the Starbucks volunteers arrive to shop with clients, restock pantry shelves, and put hygiene kits together. She says, "The Starbucks volunteers are great because they have a customer service attitude so when they serve our clients, they serve with a smile and treat them with respect."

As a community store, Starbucks hires locally and has created 32 local jobs in the Casa View area. The Starbucks Community Store serves as a meeting space for all community members and programs. With a large community table, book clubs and Coffee with Cops have met at Starbucks, and it is open to other organizations to use.

The Starbucks Foundation supports its community stores by offering foundation grants twice a year. The employees chose Wilkinson Center and Owenwood Farm & Neighbor Space to each receive a \$2,500 grant to help provide food for the community. Starbucks hopes to build 100 community stores throughout the United States.

Far East Dallas is benefiting from the support of a corporation that cares for the community it serves.



Coffee with Cops at Starbucks Community Store in Casa View

# Addressing the Far East Dallas Food Desert

by Vikki Martin



The Ferguson Road Initiative (FRI) is aware of large swaths of our community that qualify as food deserts by the USDA in Far East Dallas. That's why we are thrilled to learn that El Rio Grande Latin Market is locating a full-service grocery store in the White Rock

East community, near the Buckner Boulevard and John West Road intersection. The store is part of a \$1.3MM economic development agreement with the city of Dallas which was facilitated by Councilman Adam Bazaldua.

Located in a former Kroger store, El Rio Grande Latin Market is committed to providing fresh food, produce, meat and baked goods. "Each store is geared toward the diversity of the community. You can expect a full-scale bakery with homemade breads, and Tres Leches cakes; all made from scratch in the store. The kitchen will serve hot meals with fresh salsas and guacamole. Natural juices can be found in the Palapa Bar," says Tangela Ingram, Director of Human Resources for the company.

El Rio has a commitment to recruit, hire, and train local employees. FRI has worked with the store since October, connecting them with our area workforce training nonprofits and agencies and recently introduced them to the FRI community at a semi-annual town hall meeting.

The store is looking forward to opening their doors in this Spring.



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A selection of pastries at Lubella's Patisserie

## Local Family Opens Lubella's Patisserie in Casa View

by Susan Hopper

Upon entering Lubella's you are instantly overwhelmed by the enticing aroma and tempting cakes, cookies, scones, and croissants. Ishmael Trejo began in the restaurant business in the kitchen, and over the years has worked as a server, manager and now the owner of Lubella's Patisserie located at 10323 Ferguson Road in the Casa View Shopping Center. He and his wife, Maria Becerra, the pastry chef, chose this location because they live in Casa View and wanted to offer good food and good bread to their community.



Maria said, "We named the restaurant after our daughters, Luanna and Isabella – Lubella's."

Maria, a former pastry chef at Bullion French Restaurant, started a business in her home during COVID-19, after the restaurant closed. Ishmael was not working at the time and began making his savory sides, including his delicious pesto chicken salad, while Maria created her pastries and cakes, supplying restaurants, friends and family, building up a customer base.

On September 25, 2022, more than 350 customers attended their grand opening. Business has been growing ever since! "You can now enjoy breakfast sandwiches on the weekends and in the Spring we will have outdoor seating with a brunch menu," said Ishmael.

**FRI FACT:** On average FRI has more than 500 volunteers who donate annually an average of 4,500 community service hours, valued at \$128,000.

**FRI FACT:** In the past 25 years FRI has helped facilitate more than **\$300 million** in Economic Development in the form of affordable, middle, and high income housing and retail.

# Flexible Seniors & Chair Yoga

by Kelly Drake



We are born, then before you know it, life happens and the years seem to fly by. Getting older is something we all experience. I woke up one day and the world said, "I too was a senior." I began to search for a way to improve my balance and coordination. Yoga seemed a curious thing, practiced by really limber folks in funny little pants. Yoga has been around for centuries. Chair yoga is a modified version accomplished in or with the aid of a chair.

Benefits come through the use of poses and intentional movement, every part of your body is involved. Muscles are stretched and exercised, and an emphasis is placed on the body's circulation. With an instructor as a guide, participants move at their own pace and ability. Breathing and meditation helps one to focus on the self and relieve stress. Jessi, a local instructor, strives to provide a space where one can cultivate an honest relationship with their body." She says, "It opens the door for many healthy outcomes."

Another benefit of participating in a class is getting out of the house and making new friends of fellow seniors with a common goal. In a typical class you will meet those who have been benefiting from yoga for years or newbies like Lorna, a 72-year-old recent retiree who owned a large pool cleaning business. Used to being active, she was seeking a way to keep moving but not take a toll on her physically. You may meet someone like Georgia, one of my personal heroes. At 85 this great-grandmother with eleven grandkids has been engaged with yoga since the age of 65. Twelve years ago, she switched to chair yoga after a period of illness. "It was a way for me to regain my strength. If I can keep moving & stay strong, I can get up and do whatever I want to, when I want to," she says.

When you are ready to experience chair yoga, there are many providers of Senior Chair yoga in East Dallas:

- Owenwood Farm & Neighbor Space - Mondays, 10 a.m.
- White Rock Hills Library - Fridays, 10:30 a.m.



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# Community Creates Literacy Connection

by Robert Brown



The FRI literacy connection shines a light on three programs dedicated to promote literacy and education for young readers: Reading Partners, Book Drive for Kids, and the Lions' Free Little Library.

Reading Partners collaborates with schools to provide one-on-one tutoring sessions to students who are struggling to keep up with their classmates. By matching students with dedicated volunteers, Reading Partners helps students gain the skills and confidence they need to succeed academically. "Through the support of volunteers, over 8,000 students in DFW have been helped on their road to literacy. An hour a week from a dedicated volunteer can have lasting impacts on the life of a child. Join today – a student is waiting for your support," said Reading Partners Community Engagement Director Ashley Huff.

Book Drive for Kids collects and distributes books to children who might not have access to them otherwise. The organization believes that all children should have a rich knowledge base that only comes from access to great stories. During the current school year, Book Drive for Kids, with help from FRI and generous sponsors, has held Reading is FUNdamental Free Book Fairs at local elementary schools, allowing every student to select books based on their interests and reading levels. "Our partnership with FRI has helped connect us to the children who need and desire books to have at home. Plans are underway for every elementary school in the FRI area to participate in a free book fair," said Michelle Cook, Executive Director of Book Drive for Kids.

The Lions' Free Little Library at White Rock Hills Townhome Apartments is a small book exchange that provides access to books for adults and children. The nonprofit strives to be a catalyst for building community and increasing book access through a global network of volunteer-led book exchanges. The library is well-stocked, and It's About the Kids, Inc. organizes regular Story Times where volunteers read to children, and volunteer mentors help with homework. "We believe that youth and adults should have access to appropriate materials and programs to support literacy," said Baldwin Hamilton, co-founder of It's About the Kids, Inc.

## To Learn More:

Reading Partners: [readingpartners.org/volunteer/](http://readingpartners.org/volunteer/)

Book Drive for Kids: [bookdriveforkids.com/](http://bookdriveforkids.com/)

Lions' Free Little Free Library donate books:

[e-clubhouse.org/sites/dallasfoundertx/](http://e-clubhouse.org/sites/dallasfoundertx/).

**FRI FACT:** Students who don't read proficiently by 3rd grade are four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma than proficient readers.

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# Increasing FRI's Reach Beyond Our Backyard through Social Media

by Susan Hopper

Any new businesses in the FRI area? How does FRI help schools? Who is running for City Council? How does FRI impact the community? Get plugged in with the most current FRI information in your community by following FRI on social media. As a backbone organization, one of FRI's major roles is *communication*. We have more than 2,500 followers on Facebook and FRI just started with a new Instagram Account @fricommunity2023.

By following FRI on Instagram and Facebook and encouraging others who might be interested in the community work FRI performs, you can partner with us by staying informed and helping FRI increase our reach.

Follow what's happening in **your** community  
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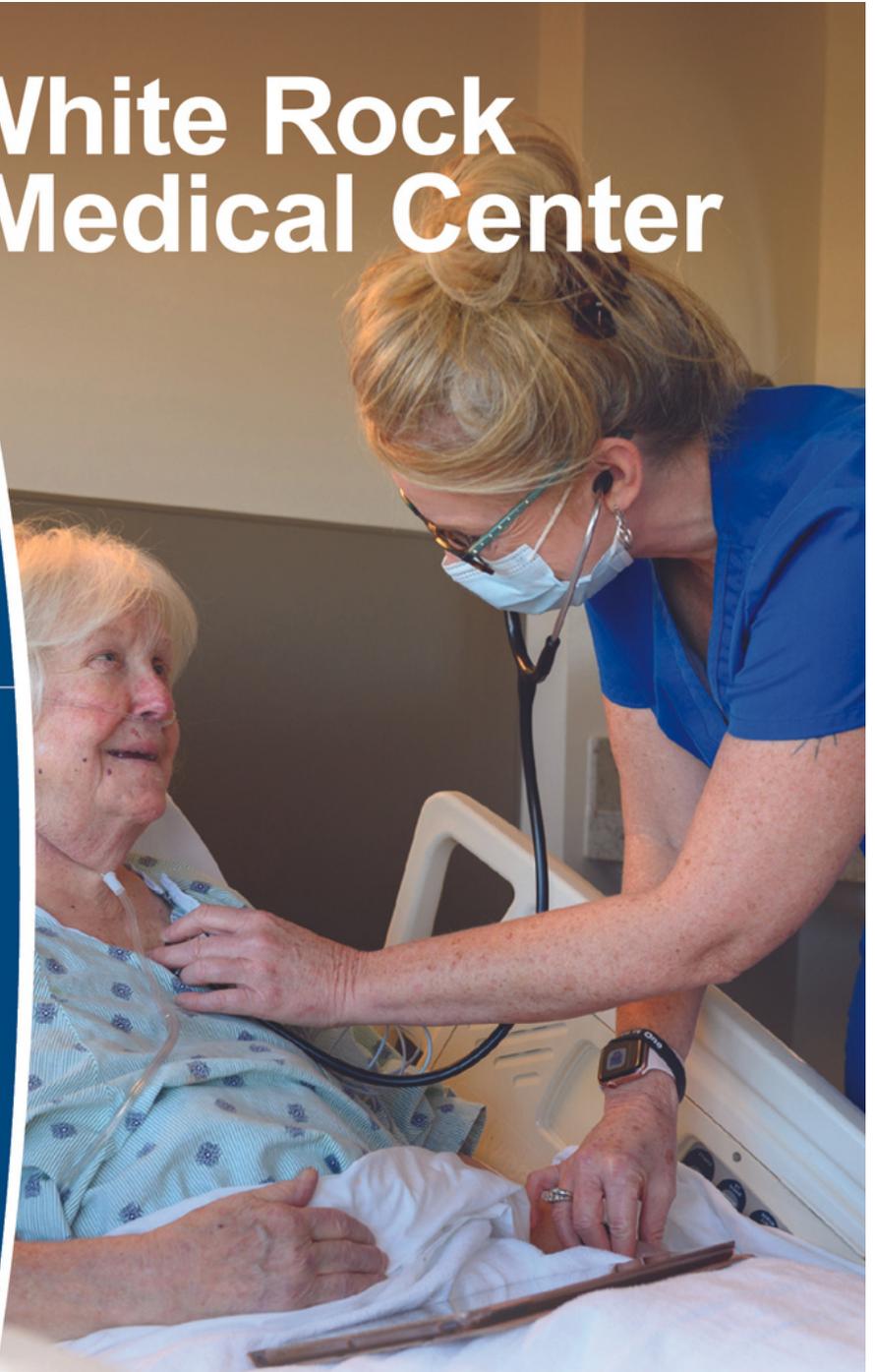
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