FERGUSON ROAD INITIATIVE SERVING FAR EAST DALLAS



FRI in ACTION!

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To place an ad in FRIdays 214-324-5116 or email vikki@fergusonroad.org

FRIdays News Staff: Publisher: Vikki J. Martin Editor/Layout: Susan Hopper



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Help FRI meet our \$60,000 GOAL!



orthtexasgivingday.org/organi ation/Ferguson-Road-Initiative

Letter from the President Volunteer opportunities included the 12th

By Dan Ortman, President, FRI



It's a thrill to report that after nearly three decades of Ferguson Road Initiative (FRI) planning and advocacy, OUR TURN HAS COME!

Funding for the \$18.1M White Rock Hills news magazine, call Vikki Martin Recreation Center (CENTER) is secured and will be built within 3-5 years on Highland Road next to White Rock Hills Park and adjacent to the Trinity Forest Spine and future Ash Creek Trails.

> Advocacy for the CENTER required heavy lifting - kudos to FRI staff and 45 engaged volunteers who made their voices heard during the 9-month-long Bond process. We recognize that there is no letting up now. FRI advocacy is still needed to assure the CENTER receives initial funding to get design and construction documents completed as soon as possible. Once designed, CENTER construction can begin.

FRI celebrates 19 years of providing free tax preparation and financial literacy training to low-income families through

the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA). Since launching VITA, 17,000+ free tax returns have been filed and over \$30M in refunds have been returned to vulnerable families.

consecutive year of hosting Operation Beautification, a new litter cleanup event at CreekSide Bike Park, and our annual blood drive.

FRI continues to report, host, and manage "hot spot" crime task force meetings for the lower Ferguson Road corridor and the Buckner/Peavy Intersection. Our efforts, along with our neighborhood HOA's, Crime Watches, and Volunteer In Patrol programs are creating a safer community.

FRI cannot do this work alone. We need your support to continue our community-building efforts, celebrations, events, meetings, and task forces. That's why I am appealing to you to support FRI during North Texas Giving Day. This is FRI's only annual fundraiser. Your gift is reinvested directly back into your community.

This year our goal is to raise \$60,000 during North Texas Giving Day on Thursday, September 19, 6 a.m.-midnight. You can give early from September 1-18. Just go to www.NorthTexasGivingDay.org, find the Ferguson Road Initiative and give.



FRI NEEDS Your Input! Take the White Rock Hills **Recreation Center** Survey!

https://forms.gle/dB4DiGFTKQHEPTGG8



6:50 pm - Townhall Meeting

I FRIdays FALL 2024 |

1

Our Turn has Come!

by Susan Hopper



The silent presence of the 33 citizens whose ages ranged from 8 to 80, filled Council Chambers as they stood holding their signs, "It's Our Turn!" Some participants had been a part of Ferguson Road Initiative (FRI) since its inception and had been

waiting for 28 years to get the attention of the city. Others participated as new members of the community, quickly learning the history of the area and the long quest for the White Rock Hills Recreation Center (CENTER). All had one thing in common. They were passionate enough to ride the bus to City Hall to let their voices be heard.

Of the 43 recreation centers in Dallas, many were easily acquired. But that wasn't the case for residents living along and near the lower Ferguson Road corridor. Although the need for a CENTER was first identified by this community in 1995 and later designated as a recreation desert by the Park & Recreation Department, time after time, our needs were ignored. Land was finally acquired by the city for the CENTER in 2017 along Highland Road. After working with 7 mayors, 11 City Councilmembers, and navigating through 5 bond programs, FRI celebrates the passing of the CENTER on the 2024 Bond Program by Dallas voters. FRI's advocacy efforts included:

1. *Doing our homework.* As a backbone organization, FRI is called to advocate, communicate, connect, and lead Far East Dallas. FRI researched the process, met with experts, compiled demographics, and communicated to all who would listen that a recreation and greenspace gap existed.

2. Nothing left to chance. From May 2023 until May 2024, FRI's full-time focus was advocacy for the CENTER. FRI served on the Bond Subcommittee for Parks/Trails, attended district townhall meetings, participated in the Dallas Park Coalition, made presentations to the Park Board, Bond Task Force, Bond Subcommittee, and City Council.

3. *The stars aligned.* And by the stars, we refer to our community, volunteers, political advocates, and city council members. FRI collected over 1,500 petitions from the community. 45+ volunteers helped advocate for the CENTER. They spoke in support of the CENTER at bond hearings; participated in the bus trip to City Hall and



"It's Our Turn!" (for a Recreation Center) was the resounding message from Far East Dallas residents.

"It is a happy day for Dallas! I want to send you my gratitude for your amazing leadership in the bond process. FRI was there every step of the way. Coming to task force meetings, waiting for hours, coming to council meetings, etc. That is what made the difference. You fought for what was right for your community and Dallas. During rough days knowing we had the backing of our friends like you rejuvenated us. Together we have achieved THE largest bond for Parks not only in Dallas, but anywhere else in the USA. This is truly historic! Thank YOU FRI, from the bottom of my heart. This would not have happened without you. My sincere thanks." - Arun Agarwal, Dallas Park Board, President

"Hard to believe it's finally coming to reality!" Doug Hunt, Access Self Storage collected petitions from our diverse community. In addition, all three of our city council members: Councilmembers Moreno (D2), Bazaldua (D7), and Blackmon (D9), as well as our Park Board appointees rallied in support of the CENTER.

The CENTER is the final step in a community-driven strategy developed in 2003 to bring greenspace, parks, trails, connectivity and recreation services to Far East Dallas. The CENTER will be a catalyst for quality economic investment.

As we plan our future, we realize our work for the CENTER is not done! Over the next 3-5 years FRI's efforts are needed to complete the following:

1. Secure initial funding (\$2M) for CENTER design and construction documents.

2. Support the creation, implementation, and analysis of a community-wide survey across all constituencies to determine programs and services for the CENTER.

3. Serve on the Request for Proposals (RFP) panel representing the community to determine the contract for the design and construction documents.

4. Secure program partners who meet the needs of the FRI community based on survey information.

5. Secure the second round funding (\$16.1M) for the CENTER's construction.

These are exciting times for our community as we envision the programs and activities that will serve our constituents and witness the building of a recreation facility that will transform lives so that all can thrive. We thank everyone for your efforts.



Maria Valenzuela speaks before City Council about Far East Dallas' need for a recreation center.

"Congratulations to you and your team! Your labor of love for your community will last generations." Brian Fisher, Granite Redevelopment

Follow the progress of the Recreation Center What is a PID and how will it impact Far East Dallas? Are townhomes being built on Ferguson Road?

Enjoy receiving the FRIdays magazine annually

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NEWSFLASH

FRI NewsFlash is a monthly digital newsletter delivered by email to keep you up-to-date on FRI in Action! Subscribe today!

fergusonroad.org/news/



A Commitment to Crime Prevention and Personal Safety

by Vikki Martin



FRI was established in 1998 as an organization dedicated to addressing escalating crime, violence and to promote public safety. FRI staff continues to identify, mobilize and train community leadership in how to report crime, encourage neighborhood

participation, and help members of their communities work with local law enforcement, city departments, and navigate City Hall. FRI monitors and reports on the status of crime and public safety at our semi-annual townhalls, Crime Task Force, Truett Area CrimeWatch Program meetings, and workshops. FRI keeps the community informed of the progress of its efforts through our robust communication platforms.

Scan the QR code to view crime statistics from June 2023 to June 2024



Crime Task Forces Crime in target areas of the Far East Dallas community has plummeted since the 2000's. This has brought increased quality economic development in the form of affordable, middle and high-income housing and retail. One reason is due to FRI's vigilance in tracking, monitoring, and addressing crime. We do this by creating temporary project coalition Task Forces to address crime hot spots when they arise. These Task Forces are flexible and are formed on an as needed basis.

Assembling Crime Task Forces involves identifying area stakeholder leadership: residents, schools, businesses, apartment owners, developers, and faith communities. These are not typical CrimeWatch meetings! Instead, we dedicate FRI staff to developing a database, maps, and communication system for the target area. Stakeholders are brought together to identify root causes of crime, an agenda is drafted, and representatives from city and county departments meet with community members to begin systematically targeting the source of crime. The purpose of the meeting is to start a dialogue between city officials and the community. This involves training citizens in how to report crime and code violations and how to work with city government. We document the key comments and agreements in these meetings and put together a meeting summary that includes an action plan of who does what and by when. This meeting summary is distributed after the conclusion of the meeting. We circle back with quarterly or semi-annually meetings during the year, depending on need.

These meetings involve reviewing the action plan from the last meeting and reporting on the status of the initial problems. These task forces have been very effective in reducing crime hot spots in our community.

FRI is administering two Crime Task Forces to address crime "hot spots":

1. Lower Ferguson Road Corridor Task Force assembled in April 2021 (overall crime reduced 20%)

2. Buckner/Peavy Task Force – assembled in August 2023 (overall crime reduced 6%)



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FRI Explores Becoming a Public Improvement District

This spring the FRI Board began exploration of creating a Public Improvement District (PID) with general boundaries from I-30 to the Oates Drive intersection, Buckner Blvd. from Ferguson to I-30, and Highland Road from St. Francis Drive to White Rock Creek. This geographic boundary would target the lower portion of Far East Dallas. A PID draws a specific boundary of property owners who petition the City to levy a supplemental assessment (not a tax) on real property that is paid with the property owner's annual tax bill. These assessment funds are reinvested back into the community to provide special supplemental services that are above and beyond existing City services.

Properties that are included in the Far East Dallas PID are generally commercial or multifamily. *Single family residences will not be drawn into the PID.* Properties can be assessed at an amount anywhere between .05-.15 cents per \$100 of property value. What makes a PID appealing to the leadership of the Ferguson Road Initiative is that half of the assessment amount collected could go to law enforcement, thus improving the safety of the community. Other ways the PID can be spent is through beautification, lighting and signage, parks, libraries, trails, recreation centers, and more.

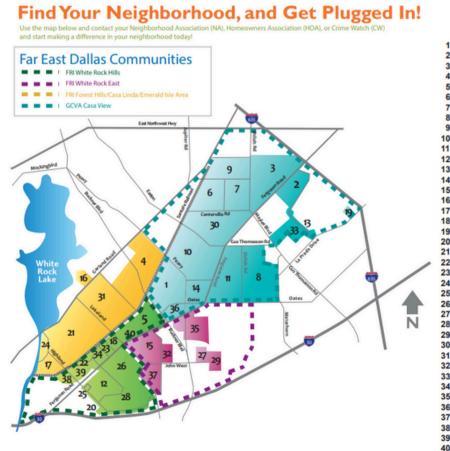
FRI is in the exploratory phase of this research and is being encouraged by our Councilmembers to seriously become a PID community. We will keep you posted on our progress. If we move forward, PID implementation would begin in February 2026.

Subscribe to the FRI NEWSFLASH

How can I keep up with what's going on with the PID?

FRI NewsFlash is a monthly digital newsletter delivered by email to keep you up-to-date on **FRI in Action!** Subscribe today!

























FRIdays FALL 2024













Photo Captions

1. Reinhardt Elementary students enjoy a book fair & meet Rowdy, the Cowboy's mascot.

2. Robert Brown donates blood during FRI's annual blood drive in partnership with Carter BloodCare.

3. Dallas Off Road Biking Association & Granite Redevelopment clean debris at CreekSide Bike Park.

4. City, Park, Trail, & Community members cut the ribbon on the new Trinity Forest Spine Trail.

5. Dog walkers & cyclists explore trail connections through the Great Trinity Forest.

6. Community members travel to City Hall to advocate for the White Rock Hills Recreation CENTER.

7. Soliciting community input on programs and services at White Rock Hills Recreation CENTER, coming soon!

8. Desi Tanner, Truett Area CrimeWatch Coordinator, receiving the FRI Obelisk Award for his volunteer service to Far East Dallas from Vikki Martin, FRI Executive Director.

9. White Rock Montessori School volunteers pitch in to clean St. Francis Park during Operation Beautification.

10. Bryan Adams HS marching band performs at the grand opening for the Trinity Forest Spine Trail.

11. Councilmembers Paula Blackmon and Adam Bazaldua, DPD Chief Eddie Garcia, and Vikki Martin attend Police Resource Fair.

12. Community members participate in civic engagement in semi-annual FRI Townhall Meetings.

13. District 2 Councilmember Jesse Moreno speaks at Ferguson Road Traffic Calming Study meeting.

14. Karen Smith and Zitziki Sanluiseño greet women at the "Women's Sense of Awareness Workshop."

Thank you generous Sponsors of

FRI Operation Beautification Litter Cleanup



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Personal Safety and Awareness

by Susan Hopper



She thinks like a criminal. In the grocery store, she's eyeing your handbag in the shopping cart. In the parking lot, she'll notice if you have your keys in your hand on the way to your car. At the gas station, she observes whether your car

is unlocked as you pump gas. All of these are opportunities for vulnerability. Deborah Freeman spent 25 years with the Dallas County Sherriff's Department as a Detention Officer and learned the ways criminals think. Now she uses her expertise to teach women public safety and awareness of their surroundings. She teacheds them how not to be a victim.

As part of Ferguson Road Initiative's commitment to public safety, Ms. Freeman facilitated a workshop at the White Rock Hills Library and empowered and educated 40 women on how to be more vigilant and conscientious when it comes to personal safety. According to a survey taken by attendees after the workshop, 97% of the participants increased their

awareness about personal safety. They left the workshop being more aware of their surroundings(80%), where they put their purses/personal belongings in public (73.3%) and needing to change some habits when walking to their cars (70%).



Universal hand signal.

One of the many important tips Ms. Freeman shared was the universal hand signal to use when someone feels threatened or is being held against their will. The signal is performed by holding your hand up with your thumb

tucked into your palm, then folding your fingers down, symbolically trapping your thumb in your fingers as shown in the picture, then repeat the motion.

When asked what the most impactful information was learned, one participant said, "the number of places where predators are waiting to steal your belongings," and another woman summed it up by saying, "Pay attention to surroundings, what others are wearing, and who is in your space."

If you would like to host a workshop in your community, contact *Deborah Freeman at womenssense@hotmail.com.*



Participants at the Ferguson Road Initiative "Women's Sense of Awareness Interactive Workshop," spent the afternoon empowering themselves to be more aware of their personal safety.



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Scan the QR code to view FRI's Membership

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"I give to FRI because I believe in giving locally. Far East Dallas is a better place because of FRI's advocacy work." -Matt Henry

as of July 31, 2024

Connecting with the Community

by Paul Maynard



What does a chamber of commerce have to do with FRI? When it comes to the Greater East Dallas Chamber of Commerce, quite a lot.

"I recently took a dive into our membership demographics and

discovered that almost one-third of our membership lies in the Ferguson Road Initiative (FRI) service area of East Dallas," Chuck Kobdish said. "That means that our communities are really entwined."

Dr. Chuck Kobdish, DC, is the current board chairman of the Greater East Dallas Chamber of Commerce. The chamber is headquartered in the Casa Linda neighborhood and has a membership that includes a broad cross section of businesses, nonprofits and government entities working in East Dallas.

"The best part of this symbiotic relationship between our organizations," Chuck continued, "is that it really helps both organizations work on our common goal of making East Dallas a better place to live, work and play."

Chuck likes to emphasize that while they are important, the chamber is more than ribbon cuttings. The diverse membership participates in over 100 chamber-sponsored events each year. "That's a lot of networking opportunities," Chuck said.

"Not only can members get something from the chamber, collectively they can get things done through the chamber." Business leads are one thing, he said. But building community is quite another. While the chamber dates to the mid-1940s, it has realized most of its growth and change in the past few years.

Monthly luncheons, a mobile app, the East Dallas Jobs Board, an economic summit and a recently launched Young Professionals group, give East Dallas businesses a chance to learn, grow and thrive.

The purpose of the Greater East Dallas Chamber of Commerce is to promote the cultural, educational and industrial interests of the East Dallas Area so that its businesses, neighborhoods and citizens shall prosper.

The mission of FRI is to engage and empower a community of advocates to advance a safe, beautiful, prosperous, and proud Far East Dallas. It is a grassroots communitybased organization comprised of HOAs, Neighborhood Associations Crime Watch, Volunteer-in-Patrol groups, law enforcement, nonprofits,



Chuck Kobdish, Board Chairman of the Greater East Dallas Chamber of Commerce

apartments, businesses, faith-based groups, schools, and other concerned constituencies, all working towards accomplishing a shared mission and vision. The Ferguson Road Initiative is a proud member of the Greater East Dallas Chamber of Commerce.



Drive Your Business Forward.

Join the Greater East Dallas Chamber of Commerce today. Learn more at:

EastDallasChamber.com



Traffic Calming Study Update

by Vikki Martin



FRI continues to track the progress of the City of Dallas' Traffic Calming Study. This study was launched near the end of the pandemic after a series of vehicular and pedestrian deaths occurred due to speed racing.

Preliminary findings of this study were presented in late February to the Far East Dallas community for feedback and revision. Meantime, while the city continues to analyze and incorporate the input they received, U. S. Congressman Colin Allred facilitated \$2M in federal funding to help jumpstart safety improvements along Ferguson Road from I-30 to I-635. It is anticipated that this initial investment will leverage other funding sources, such as Council of Governments (COG) funding.

NBC investigative reporter Scott Freidman has been following the story on Ferguson Road. He took a short tour of the area to help bring awareness to public safety concerns. NBC 5 aired several stories regarding traffic safety on Ferguson Road.



Vikki Martin, Ex Dir, FRI, takes NBC reporter, Scott Freidman on a tour of Ferguson Road to point out some of the safety issues along the corridor.

View the NBC news stories, scan the QR codes below

Draft traffic study suggests major changes to slow speedy drivers on Ferguson Road in Far East Dallas aired 2/7/24

Dallas residents hear plan to address speeding, red light running along dangerous road aired 2/29/24











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Change of Scenery

by Kelly Drake



A splash of color, some time and talent, can transform an empty, wasted space or a neighborhood. The canvas, a dumpster located on the property where the old Casa View Library stood, 10355 Ferguson Road. Usually defaced with graffiti, this was not what the residents of vibrant Little Casa View (LCV) neighborhood desired to see when coming and going on Joaquin Drive. LCA president

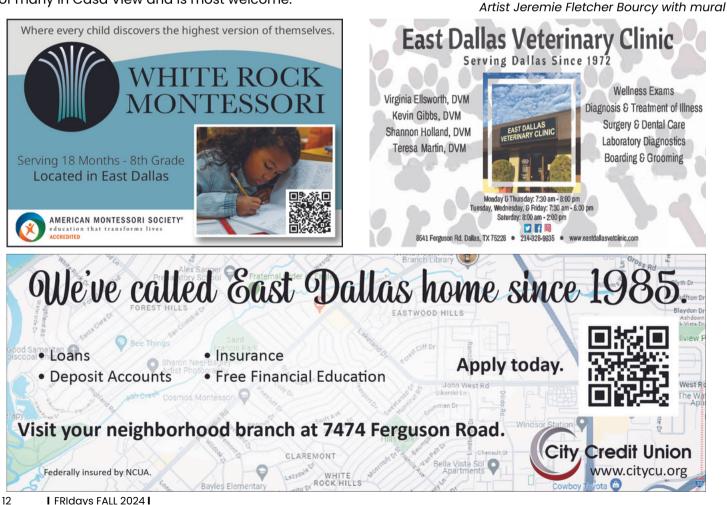
Heidi Bassett stated residents targeted the dumpster for a makeover. The owner of the property, Kenneh Anh, gave his approval for the design and painting to begin. He also helped pay for the anti-graffiti paint.

A theme that harkens to the era of flower power and peace signs was decided on. Artist Jeremie Fletcher Bourcy and community volunteers, with a few gallons of paint, created a work of art to replace an eyesore. Bassett said it was important for community members and customers of the shopping center to be involved in the painting. "Hopefully if they are a part of it, they will help maintain it, help keep it nice". Part of the mural includes the outlines of hands and names of the participants. The neighborhood association is identifying and looking for other ways to remove urban decay and improve their area. This new mural is one of many in Casa View and is most welcome.



The dumpster was covered in grafitti





DISD Creates Opportunities

by Dan Micciche



When I was running for the school board, one thing I often heard from my East Dallas neighbors was that we need to bring back vocational education. We are doing just that now in a much bigger way than ever before and in many new areas as well as traditional fields.

High School students across DISD now have the opportunity to attend classes at their home campus and pursue career interests at one of the four new Career Institutes, one in each quadrant of the city.

For example, Bryan Adams High School students can attend the Career Institute East, where they can prepare for high-demand, high-wage careers in the following areas: construction, plumbing, electrical, HVAC, interior design, cybersecurity, patient care tech and pharmacy tech. Each program provides students with an industry certification and work-based learning experiences like an apprenticeship.

Turning to another amazing opportunity for our students—our P-tech/Early College Programs. Bryan Adams and over 20 other neighborhood high schools have early college programs that provide students with the opportunity to get a head start on college by earning 60 college credits while still in high school. Under this program, students can earn an associate degree at no cost to them.

The Bryan Adams Early College Program is a partnership with Dallas College's Eastfield Campus. Students can explore a range of careers in Education and Criminal Justice. Under this program, Bryan



Level IV Trauma Center, Primary Stroke Center, Chest Pain Center, & Comprehensive Bariatric Center

9440 Poppy Drive Dallas, Texas 75218 214-324-6100 Adams will be "growing our own" future police officers and future teachers. More than 10 percent of Dallas ISD seniors this past year graduated with both a high school diploma and an associate degree at the time of their high school graduation. This is a formidable accomplishment. There are over 100 Industry Partners involved in this program across the district. They offer input on the types of programs needed for workforce, curriculum, mentors, and internships for our students.



Bryan Adams High School students continue to shine. Congratulations to 2024 BA graduate Natalie A., who will be attending Harvard University in the fall. Angelina Solis, a 2020 BA graduate who experienced homelessness in Dallas, egrned her bachelor's

Natalie A. will attand Harvard in Fall 2024 and major in Biology

degree this year from Texas A&M! And 2015 BA graduate Dominique James, earned a PhD in biomedical engineering this year, becoming the first Black woman PhD in the Department of Bioengineering at UT Dallas.



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New East Dallas School Raises Expectations for Education

In an area populated primarily by car dealerships and industrial buildings, Uplift Education's newest school has changed the landscape of East Dallas in more ways than one. Uplift Luna Preparatory at White Rock East was previously housed in two locations near downtown Dallas. It now occupies 15 acres just north of the I-30 and Highway 80 connection.

The free public charter school houses 1,300 students from Pre-K through 12th grade on a campus that is spectacular. Separate buildings for Pre-K, primary, middle, and high schools surround a college-style quad area with ample room to play, congregate, and relax. The buildings are full of natural light, bright colors, and unique common areas. A full-sized UIL gym and soccer field contribute to the school spirit and culture.

"We've been providing an excellent education for our students for nearly 15 years," said Uplift Luna Secondary Head of School Catherine Woodiel, "but this building has been a game changer. You can see the difference it makes when children have a bright and spacious environment. Not only do they have a sense of pride in this new facility, but they show up each day ready to learn and participate."

"While we are happy to provide this home to our existing students, we are also excited to provide a new choice for the families of East Dallas," continued Woodiel. "Our school is an International Baccalaureate" (IB[®]) authorized school, which means we offer a unique academic experience you can't find anywhere else in this area." The International Baccalaureate[®] programs develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young



Uplift Luna Preparatory at White Rock East campus. I FRIdays FALL 2024 I people motivated to succeed. This unique education model has proven successful, with 100% of Uplift Luna seniors being accepted to college. This achievement, along with the school's recognition by U.S. News & World Report among the top 7% of schools in the nation, is a testament to the school's academic standards and commitment to student success.

Demand for spots at Uplift Luna Preparatory has been high since its opening in January 2024. While the school does not charge tuition fees, space is limited, and spots are filled through a lottery system. Just down the road sits another Uplift school – Uplift White Rock Hills – which serves Pre-K through 5th grade. Students at Uplift White Rock Hills have the advantage of automatic admission to Uplift Luna when they progress to 6th grade.

Uplift Education is the largest charter school network in DFW. It has been serving students and families since 1996 in underserved areas across the metroplex, and its new Uplift Luna flagship campus is changing the landscape of education.

Families can learn more about the school, schedule a tour, or apply at uplifteducation.org/uplift-luna.



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Classes meet October 14 - December 15 Once a week for 3hrs.

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FRI Welcomes New Bayles Principal

Working together for the greater good. FRI demonstrates our motto on a daily basis. FRI works to connect and support education enrichment programs/services for our area schools.

Caption: Miguel Campuzano (Principal, Bayles Elem. Sch.), Ryan Bott (Ex. Dir. Vertical Team, DISD), Dan Micciche (Trustee, DISD), Alyson Black (SBDM, Bayles Elem. Sch.), Debbie Shaw (President, CANA), Vikki Martin (Ex. Dir., FRI), Melanie Alvarado (Bayles Parent), Amy Seo (Bayles Parent), Bayles Students

September 19th

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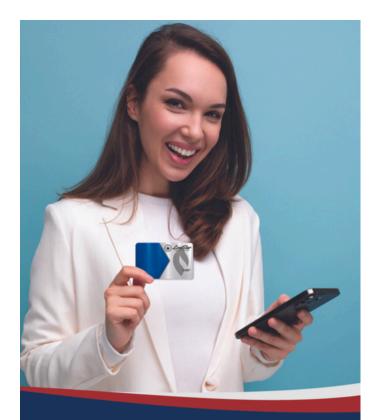
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