

METRO

Orphanage evolved into mental health center

My cousins were placed in an orphanage in San Antonio for several years between about 1955 and 1965. One of my cousins is very curious about his time there, the history of the orphanage, who ran it, whether pictures exist, etc. It was on the corner of St. Cloud and Woodlawn – but since my cousins were so young when they were there, they don't have much information. What is the history – especially late 1950s and early '60s?

– **Karen Seal**

I am participating in a national study on the treatment of diabetes. While researching my family's history of diabetes, I am seeking the 1929 records for the Protestant Orphans Home at 3031 W. Woodlawn Ave. My mother was left there in November 1929, but her name – Francis Marie Steitle – does not appear at the home in the 1930 (U.S.) census. Best as I can tell, the home ceased operation around 1962. I think the building was demolished in the last few years, and there now may be a Walmart at that address. Can you suggest a contact who may know who has these records? The San Antonio Public Library and the state of Texas do not.

– **John Browning**

Both questions are about the Protestant Orphans' Home, which has been closed for decades and is about to celebrate its 135th birthday. The former orphanage (previously discussed here Aug. 24, 2008) morphed into the present-day Clarity Child Guidance Center, a mental health treatment center, through a lengthy series of changes in names, addresses and approaches to helping children in need.

The institution's birth date is counted from June 23, 1886, when a group of 13 women met over lunch at the Menger Hotel to



PAULA ALLEN

plan what became the Home for Destitute Children. The names of prominent families were represented among the founders – Chabot, Dignowity, Kampmann and Maverick among them. Businessman/philanthropist George W. Brackenridge was the first benefactor, enabling them to rent a house at 217 Sixth St., where at first six children were accommodated.

Orphanages at that time and well beyond were strictly separated by race and religion. Founded as a home for needy white children, it was renamed the Protestant Home for Destitute Children in 1888 and moved to successively larger premises – 815 San Pedro Ave. and then 802 Kentucky Ave. With its Catholic counterpart, the St. Peter-St. Joseph Children's Home, the Protestant home was one of the largest and longest-lived of such facilities here.

Not only children without parents were served but also those whose families were unable to care for them properly, including those who were too ill or too poor to do so, as well as widowed parents overwhelmed by the need to work and care for young children at the same time.

After a successful capital campaign that raised \$250,000, the organization built a large red-brick building on 50 acres – used to keep chickens, pigs and dairy cattle and to raise vegetables – at 3031 W. Woodlawn Ave., and the children moved in Jan. 25, 1926. The site was named the Protestant Orphans' Home.

During some periods, the young residents attended school at the or-



Courtesy Clarity Child Guidance Center

Residents of the Protestant Orphans' Home are minded by a few matrons as they pose for a photo on the orphanage grounds that likely was taken in the late 1920s.

phanage, where they were kept busy with chores as well as lessons. The home was a popular local charity; fraternal orders and civic clubs made donations and sponsored outings and treats, as did church groups and Scout troops.

Not all the attention was benign.

"My mother and her sister both lived out their childhoods in that institution," wrote Patricia McDaniel of Cheyenne, Wyo., after the 2008 column was published. "She told me many stories about the orphanage, most of them disturbing and bleak. Some of the orphanage staff were not suitable to be working with children, and often older 'gentleman' from San Antonio were allowed to take little girls or boys on outings to the movies or for ice cream. The orphanage staff saw it as a kindness, and I doubt it ever occurred to them that these children were often exploited and abused by their 'benefactors.'"

It could be a hard-knock life, but for older residents, especially, there were bright spots.

For a July 28, 2004, San Antonio Express-News story on the home, mid-1940s resident James

Mosier recalled attending dances and playing softball against church league teams, followed by a repast of hot dogs cooked by the coach. By that time, residents attended public school. Mosier rose at 5 a.m. to fire up the boiler for the laundry. "I don't know how I managed to graduate," he said, but he did and left to join the military.

The institution was renamed the Protestant Children's Home of San Antonio. In 1956, another institution, the Community Guidance Center, opened to treat mental illness in children.

In the early 1960s, the Protestant home moved away from the concept of dormitory living and supervision by matrons to a cottage system of small groups cared for by house parents, selling the Woodlawn mansion to build five small houses at 2939 W. Woodlawn. By 1965, the home had added its own therapy team, recognizing the mental health needs of its young residents, and over the next decades, the institution's mission moved from sheltering homeless children to providing psychiatric services for young patients.

In 1972, it became the

San Antonio Children's Center and began a relationship with the Community Guidance Center. Through the 1980s, more beds were added to the Woodlawn campus, which provided inpatient services, while the Guidance Center provided outpatient services. The cooperation with the Guidance Center led to the establishment of a second unit for the Children's Center at 8535 Tom Slick Drive in the South Texas Medical Center – the current location of the Clarity Child Guidance Center.

The former orphanage became a children's psychiatric hospital, first as the Southwest Neuropsychiatric Institute and then as the Southwest Mental Health Center, which closed the Woodlawn facility in 2000. This institution merged with the Community Guidance Center in 2009, and the name was changed the next year to the Clarity Child Guidance Center, a nonprofit mental health treatment facility for children ages 3-17.

Keeping up with all these adjustments – it's a lot. But it kept the former 19th-century orphanage relevant, says Jessica Knudsen, Clarity's CEO

and president. "One of the reasons I was drawn to join the Clarity Child Guidance team was how much the organization has pivoted over the years to meet the needs of the community. That flexibility and adaptability is what has allowed the organization to be present for the last 135 years taking care of the most vulnerable among us."

Board Chair Joanna Weidman credits the "small group of volunteers" who started the organization because of their concern for children in need, "and 135 years later, it's still going strong because of the countless volunteers who have followed in their footsteps. While the people and places have changed over the years, the quality of care and commitment to the children have not."

Records from the Protestant home were transferred to its successor institution. They include records of children for most years between 1886 and 1928, scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, some residents' report cards and birth certificates. To request information, call Clarity at the number below.

Clarity also is celebrating the eighth birthday of its annual training event on children's mental health. Claritycon will be held virtually July 23; the professional education opportunity for educators, therapists, physicians and child care workers will feature experts addressing issues such as trauma, neglect, bullying, discipline and depression. For details or to register, visit www.claritycgc.org or call 210-593-2148

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The return of Rey Feo



Kin Man Hui / Staff photographer

Rey Feo LXXI Dr. Sal A. Barbaro III officially crowns Thomas Aguillon as Rey Feo LXXII for the Rey Feo Consejo Educational Foundation during a ceremony Friday in front of the San Fernando Cathedral in Main Plaza. The ceremony was one of many Fiesta events that have returned.

MEDICAID

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fers them funding to do so.

A spokeswoman for Abbott did not respond to a request for comment.

Doggett estimated that if San Antonio, Houston and Dallas alone signed on to the proposal, half of the state's eligible uninsured population would gain access. All three cities are led by Democrats and have pushed for Medicaid expansion.

Statewide, more than 1.2 million Texans would be eligible for Medicaid if state officials were to expand the program, according to a study by the The Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University

More than 2 million people are thought to be in the coverage gap today, meaning they make too much to qualify for traditional Med-



Win McNamee / Getty Images

U.S. Rep Lloyd Doggett has introduced the COVER NOW Act that is intended to close an existing gap in Medicaid coverage.

icaid but not enough to qualify for subsidized insurance under the Affordable Care Act. Most are people of color, and the biggest group is in Texas, a state that has long had the highest uninsured rate in the country.

Anne Dunkelberg, a policy analyst for the left-leaning think tank Every Texan, said the new legislation would also increase funding to state health officials for any added administrative costs.

"Congressman Doggett's bill really recognizes how

entrenched the ultra-conservative opposition to expansion is in Texas and the need to really connect the dots about what it's going to take for us to get possibly a million and a half uninsured adults – the vast majority of them working – coverage," she said.

Doggett hopes to pass the measure through a process called reconciliation, which requires only a simple majority to pass in the U.S. Senate. Without that, Republicans would likely filibuster to block it from being voted

Texas Medicaid expansion, by the numbers

- 4.1 million:** Texans currently enrolled in Medicaid
- 1.27 million:** Texans who would be eligible for coverage under expansion
- \$5.4 billion:** Additional federal dollars for Medicaid if the state expanded
- \$600 million:** Texas' expected contribution under expansion, or 10 percent of the federal match
- \$66.5 billion:** Current two-year budget for Medicaid, 60 percent of which is funded by the federal government

SOURCE: THE BUSH SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

on. In a letter last week, members of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Asian Pacific American Caucus urged the Biden administration to find a way to extend coverage to low-income adults in states that have so far refused.

"It is unacceptable for the federal government to continue to allow some states to deny basic health coverage to these uninsured and underinsured Americans," they wrote. They noted that states with expanded Medicaid have lowered racial disparities in coverage rates, affordability of care and some health outcomes including maternal and infant mortality.

"The coronavirus pandemic has only illuminated the far-reaching, fatal consequences of inadequate access to health care," they wrote. "Addressing the Medicaid coverage gap is critical both in correcting decades of unacceptable and unjust denial of health care coverage to underserved and minority populations throughout the United States and in protecting our nation from future pandemics."

Tezel Substation and Transmission Line Project

CPS Energy will host a virtual Board Public Input Meeting regarding the **Tezel Substation and Transmission Line Project.**

Thursday, June 24, 2021

**Agenda:
6 PM - Public Input Meeting**

The CPS Energy Board of Trustees, the CPS Energy Citizens Advisory Committee, senior management, and project team members will hear comments from interested customers.

You may also call in and listen to the Public Input Session by dialing 888-886-6602 on the date of the event. You may also livestream the meeting on CPS Energy's website.

Customers who wish to speak should register in advance using the information provided in their mailed communication, or by visiting: cpsenergy.com/tezel

This virtual input session is free and open to the public.



For more information, please contact Antonio DeMendonca, Project Manager, CPS Energy at (210-353-4895) or at TezelProject@cpsenergy.com

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS AND PARTIES:

City Public Service Board, has applied to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for renewal of Air Quality Permit No. 45641, which would authorize continued operation of the V H Braunig A Von Rosenberg Plant located at 15290 Streich Road, Elmendorf, Bexar County, Texas 78112. Additional information concerning this application is contained in the public notice section of this newspaper.