



Harris County Hospital District

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MEDIA RELEASE

State Representative Helps Hospital District Mark International Literacy Day

HOUSTON (Sept. 19, 2006) – The Harris County Hospital District celebrated International Literacy Day on Sept. 8 with help from State Representative Sylvester Turner, who treated young patients and guests to a special book reading at Ben Taub General Hospital. Sitting cross-legged on a colorful rug, Turner narrated a children’s book about colors to an attentive crowd in the pediatric library.

The event was part of the hospital district’s year-round BOOKS program, which promotes health literacy among patients through reading. Through the program, red “Half Pint” carts donated by Half Price Books are filled with children’s books and placed in waiting rooms and clinic areas at Ben Taub and Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital for patients and guests to enjoy. The program also distributes donated books and recruits volunteers to host “story time” in common areas throughout the hospitals.

“The reading sessions are a real treat for our patients and guests, both big and small,” said Carla Brown, BOOKS program coordinator. “It’s hard for children to leave the clinic area when they’re waiting for an appointment, and it’s easy for them to get bored. Through the program, we can bring ‘story time’ to them. It makes the wait more enjoyable and it sparks kids’ interest in reading. Sometimes, we even see the parents get involved.”

Prior to hosting “story time,” Turner joined hospital district President and CEO David S. Lopez in leading a panel discussion for staff on the importance of youth and adult literacy in our community. Panel members also included Jeffrey Starke, M.D., chief of pediatrics at Ben Taub; Susan King, PhD., project director of Reach Out and Read-Texas; Kelly Trlica, PhD., assistant superintendent of secondary curriculum, instruction and assessment for the Houston Independent School District; and Diana Morales, chief of outreach services for the Houston Public Library.

The Harris County Hospital District is the public healthcare system for the nation’s third most-populous county. It provides more than 1.1 million health care visits each year to uninsured and underinsured residents of Harris County. The hospital district operates Ben Taub General Hospital, Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital, Quentin Mease Community Hospital, 12 community health centers, a dental center, seven school-based clinics, 13 homeless shelter clinics and four mobile health units.

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