Ed is a 57-year-old former construction worker with health problems more typical of someone in their 70s, worsened from sleeping in the woods in South Austin.

Last January, Ed (whose real name I withhold at his request) came to South Austin’s Sunrise Community Church for a free breakfast and heard about a health clinic operating right there in the sanctuary. The clinic is a collaboration of Dell Medical School, CommUnityCare, Integral Care and organizations helping people who are experiencing homelessness. It shows how Dell Med works with partners to create holistic, person-centered approaches to health and care, systematically addressing issues in easily accessible ways.

The clinic connected Ed with Dr. Tim Mercer, a Dell Med faculty member and physician who addressed Ed’s primary care needs, refilled his medicines and referred him to specialists — not at some distant and inconvenient clinic, but right where Ed got his breakfast.

Ed also signed up for SNAP (food stamps) through the Central Texas Food Bank and supportive housing through the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition. On-site case managers helped with referrals, appointments and transportation. He accessed mental health services and signed up for disability benefits to help pay rent.

Addressing these life issues stabilized Ed’s health, helping him avoid taxpayer-funded emergency-room visits and showing how by focusing on the whole person and all factors contributing to health, we can offer so much more than typical health care.
We at Dell Med want to extend this whole-person approach to people across the community, regardless of circumstances, through a range of projects and partnerships. As the Sunrise clinic demonstrates, we are becoming much more accessible as we work to revolutionize how people get and stay healthy and fulfill the aspirations of voters who created the school in 2012.

We're meeting our ambitious mission in three major ways:

**Working with clinical and community partners to improve care.**

Dell Med oversees dozens of residency programs, putting hundreds of doctors to work in clinics and hospitals operated by CommUnityCare, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Dell Children’s Medical Center and others. Together with Ascension Seton, Dell Med increased the number of medical residents caring for Central Texans by more than 30 percent since 2012.

Through a new colon cancer screening model created with CommUnityCare, we've delivered home test kits to more than 15,000 patients. We leveraged $2.3 million from the Cancer Prevention Research Institute of Texas to help address this inequity in our community.

**Working collaboratively to create a better health system.**

Through $15.5 million funding from the state, Dell Med leads a collaboration to redesign the Austin State Hospital. This work presents a unique opportunity to reimagine not just a hospital, but also an improved system of person-centered brain health that’s a model for Texas.

We also encourage community-based ideas to improve health through our Center for Place-Based Initiatives. This supports people closest to their neighborhood’s health challenges who have creative ideas for addressing them.

**Providing direct care through UT Health Austin.**

Dell Med’s faculty and staff designed and manage UT Health Austin clinics, just over a year old. Clinics include the Women’s Health Institute, Mulva Clinic for the Neurosciences, Musculoskeletal Institute (treating joint and back issues), and WorkLife Walk-In Clinic (for workplace injuries). We are here for the broad community, easy to find online and accepting most insurance plans.
These examples of your medical school's work show how far we've come since voters elected to invest in Dell Med. We're still in the early days fulfilling the school's promise, and we’re excited about what’s next.

This year will bring new programs and partnerships, including with school districts to strengthen health professions pipelines, and new clinics and services.

While we are proud of our progress, we still have exciting work to do together to make Austin a model healthy city.

*Johnston is inaugural dean of the Dell Medical School at the University of Texas.*