# INSIDE



SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPRING 2018





Dr. Mike Fulton meets with Shawnee Mission high school journalism students

## A New Day

A Message From the Interim Superintendent

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." - Eleanor Roosevelt

ew beginnings are everywhere in Shawnee Mission. The sun is warmer and students across the district are planting vegetable and flower gardens. If you've walked the halls of a high school lately, you can feel the energy as graduation draws near. Students are making plans for their next chapter, while soaking up the last weeks of their journey in Shawnee Mission schools. Spring is pretty special in the Shawnee Mission School District.



Dr. Kenny Southwick

Spring also is a time for new beginnings for our youngest learners. Our pre-kindergarten program continues to expand.

Our youngest students have the opportunity for the best possible start with handson activity and purposeful play to prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. April is also Kindergarten Roundup time when the class of 2032 begins their K-12 journey.

Also, the Shawnee Mission School District is preparing to welcome Dr. Mike Fulton as the new superintendent. We are confident that Dr. Fulton brings to the district the qualities community and patrons seek in a superintendent. His consensus-building style and experience with an ethnically and culturally diverse student population are sure to make a positive difference in our district. He has a student-first philosophy and commitment to student achievement which will carry forward the tradition of excellence and innovation that makes Shawnee Mission School District the extraordinary school district it is today.

This issue includes a recap of a recent meeting with Dr. Fulton and Shawnee Mission students. It will give you an introduction to his philosophy of education. I know you'll join me in welcoming him to our outstanding community in July.

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ON THE COVER: Dr. Mike Fulton meets with Shawnee Mission high school journalism students. Read about their conversation on page 4.

#### #ourSMSDstory f L \*\*

Help us share the good news from our district on social media.

#### INSIDE

Shawnee Mission School District 8200 W. 71st Street Shawnee Mission, KS 66204

Inside Shawnee Mission School District is published by the Communication Department in the Shawnee Mission School District.

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## WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? TOMOR-ROW STARTS TODAY.



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## A Conversation with Dr. Mike Fulton



r. Mike Fulton will be Shawnee Mission's next superintendent beginning July 1, 2018. At a special meeting of the Board of Education on Feb. 12, 2018, the Shawnee Mission School Board unanimously appointed Fulton to the position.

Dr. Fulton is currently serving as Superintendent of Pattonville School District, located in the greater St. Louis, Missouri area. Community members were first introduced to Fulton during a community forum, prior to the board's appointment.

On a recent visit to our district, Dr. Fulton met with nine Shawnee Mission School District student journalists who talked with him about his plans and ideas as he looks forward to his new role. This was the first time he was able to meet Shawnee Mission students, and they spent more than an hour together talking. He considered it a privilege, he said, and he had as many questions for them as they had for him.

After thanking them for meeting with him, he explained that student voices are extraordinarily important to him. Here are highlights of that conversation.

#### What is your overarching vision for education?

Nationally, we must do a better job educating all students. Improving learning for all children begins with understanding the students you serve and then customizing learning experiences to meet their needs. For decades, we've provided education to students in a certain way, counting on the idea that if everyone learns in that certain way at the same rate, then it turns out OK. However, we know that everyone does not learn in the same way or at the same pace.

Achieving better academic outcomes for all students requires holding learning as the constant and using time, structure and instructional strategies as variables to achieve those outcomes. Every child matters and every child can learn. The challenge is how we organize learning to support every child's growth in mastering important academic outcomes (e.g. Algebra, etc.) in ways that customize to their strengths. It's critical to note that the learning bar never changes. How and when students reach that academic standard is customized to the learner. The need for more personalized learning environments is common to all school districts. The reality is, our students face a future very different from today's context. Indeed, it is a world not yet invented. Our job is to prepare every single child for that future.

You've seen an increase in diversity at Pattonville. You've also seen an increase in student performance. Can you speak to that?

I strongly believe that diversity in school districts is a strength. Part of our duty as educators is teaching students to value and appreciate a diverse culture. In the Pattonville School District, we've demonstrated that diversity and high achievement go hand in hand. As our diversity increased, so did our student performance. You can and should have high student achievement with a diverse student population. The key is to have the same high expectations for every single student and then, working from meaningful data, personalize the learning environment to achieve defined outcomes.

To support students' academic achievement, we must also meet their physical, social and emotional needs. Schools around the country, and in every context, are adjusting practices to better meet students where they are in life. We also see a world that is growing more diverse. If current demographic projections hold true, by 2020, the majority of 0-18 year olds in this country will be children of color (U.S. Census Bureau). That's a wonderful tapestry of diversity. It's important that we design our schools to ensure that every single student feels accepted and is successful in school. These changes require different strategies going forward than what we've relied on in the past.

#### Why were you attracted to Shawnee Mission School District?

The superintendent profile created by the community and patrons of the Shawnee Mission School District drew me in because the profile seemed like a fit. The district also has an outstanding reputation for excellence, which was compelling. Most important, I realized that Shawnee Mission is currently facing many of the issues that come from changing demographics that Pattonville faced years ago. We've had terrific success adjusting our instructional environments to ensure all students achieve at a higher level of learning. In joining the Shawnee Mission School District team, it is my goal to work collaboratively with students, staff, parents and community to help SMSD get even better in its academic performance.

#### Why did you leave Pattonville when you've been there for so long?

We have a fantastic and experienced leadership team in Pattonville. I could see that leaders around me were growing in their positions and were ready to take the lead. It was a perfect time to provide the Board of Education with an opportunity to select a new leader. At the same time, I started to think about what the next chapter of my life's journey might look like. Part of that reflection involved exploring options on how to take what I've learned and continue to support students and teachers. Shawnee Mission seemed like a great fit.

#### How would you describe your style of leadership?

Collaborative. Most of my career has been spent working with teachers and staff to improve teaching and learning for children. The only way you can improve learning at any school district of any size is to work together as a team to meet students' needs. Then you design specific solutions at the school level to make sure you have instructional strategies and structures in place that help them learn.

School and district improvement done well, in a sustainable way, requires a limited number of clear learning targets and an inclusive, methodical process. It takes time to identify and build a repertoire of strategies and structures that achieve results. When teachers, support staff and administrators work together to achieve a limited number of clearly defined outcomes, children win. Parents, students and community members must also be part of an on-going school improvement process. Broad inclusion brings diversity of viewpoints on how to achieve key academic outcomes along with the social-emotional supports students need to be engaged learners. The key to success is staying focused on students and their learning.

"For me, it's all about the students, all the time."

– Dr. Mike Fulton

#### What do you think about the financial challenges in the state of Kansas?

This is a hard time to be an educator. We can only control what we control. If the budget is uncertain, we'll budget conservatively to ensure that our resources get to the school level where they can positively impact the students. That's the first priority. Then you work together to identify the other priorities and how to fund those. That's the current reality not only in Kansas, but across the country.

#### What will your first priorities be?

Getting to know the teachers, staff, parents and students will be the first and most important priority. I also want to interact with students in a meaningful way. You can learn a lot by listening to students.

I'll have a lot of learning to do up front. I want to understand the strength that's already in Shawnee Mission. What works well? Where can we improve? How we can work as a team to address those areas? These are the sorts of questions that will help build my understanding of the traditions, culture and future work of Shawnee Mission. As personal understanding builds, I will work to support the teachers so they are able to help all their students learn better.

While it's bittersweet to leave Pattonville, I'm ready to move to Shawnee Mission and become a part of this community. I know there will be challenges, but I feel well suited to handle them – with a team approach.



## Pre-kindergarten Students Imagine, Explore and Discover

child's early years are critical. From birth to age 5, fundamental cognitive, social, and behavioral skills are developed, providing the foundation upon which all later learning and behavior depend.

The Shawnee Mission School District pre-kindergarten program teaches the whole child, socially and emotionally as well as academically. A child who has a great developmental foundation will be much more likely to succeed in school, Dr. Leigh Anne Neal, assistant superintendent for early childhood education said.

That is why pre-kindergarten will be offered at 17 elementary schools in 2018-19, which represents more than half of the elementary schools in the district. The district's goal is to eventually provide pre-kindergarten in every elementary school.

"In addition to early literacy and numeracy, students learn skills such as taking turns, sharing and following directions - all essential components for future social, behavioral, and academic success," Neal said.

Visit pre-kindergarten classrooms across the district, and it might look like the children are only playing and having fun. As Neal points out, the play is creative, interactive and purposeful.

#### Me Museum

To help students practice a variety of academic and social skills, teachers Lisa Berbiglia and Emily Ruble had their students create a "Me Museum" this year at Briarwood Elementary. Students



gathered facts about themselves and prepared an exhibit all about "them."

When the museum opened, students shared their own facts and took turns being a visitor at the museum. Acting as a visitor, pre-kindergarten students learned about their other classmates. They learned how to walk appropriately around a museum, interact in a twopart conversation, and they even practiced math skills by buying and selling museum tickets.

"Our scholars were genuinely interested in what their peers brought to the museum and we learned so much about one another," said Berbiglia. "Most importantly, we experienced the joy of celebrating what makes each of us unique and special. Unique is one of our classroom's favorite new words!"

#### **Benefits of Purposeful Play**

While purposeful play connects students to math, science, literature, and social studies, it also gives them an opportunity to make a positive impact in their community.

For a period of time this year, Briarwood students became "rock scientists" and collected rocks from home and school grounds. As they learned about different types of rocks, they sorted, washed and painted them. They discussed the worth of each rock and priced them from one to 10 cents each. Then they sold them to raise funds for a program that supports children through United Way of Greater Kansas City.

At the conclusion, they participated in a video chat session with United Way and saw a children's play area that would be supported by their donation. This gave students a concrete understanding of how their generosity impacted the world around them.

"We are teaching them strategies, so they can be lifelong learners," Ruble said. "We create activities so they are immersed and ready to learn everything from hanging up their coat to how glue works. Pre-kindergarteners who have learned how to be students are excited about school and many become the leaders of their kindergarten classes."

#### **Curiosity makes the** garden grow

Rosehill students recently partnered with Kansas City Community Gardens (KCCG) to install a vegetable garden. An interest in gardening was sparked



when teacher Bridgette Fullington brought potatoes to school and students began asking questions about planting and growing food.

"It sprouted an interest I never expected," Fullington said.

Inspired by their curiosity, Fullington worked with Joan Leavens, coordinator of sustainability and community engagement, and obtained a grant through KCCG to help them create three raised gardening beds at Rosehill Elementary.

To prepare for the garden installation, Crystal Fritz from KCCG visited the students and read a story, "The Surprise Garden," by Zoe Hall. They talked about how soil, sun and water were needed to grow vegetables. A garden bin filled with dirt and beads, used in place of seeds, allowed the students to practice planting a garden. They made straight rows and left plenty of room between the seeds. They also used the correct tools that included a trowel, rake and watering can.

They are planning a Harvest Party where they will make a salad from the plants they've grown.

"This is a wonderful example of students, staff and community working together in project-based learning to engage our youngest learners in all the world has to offer," Neal said.

#### **How to Enroll**

Shawnee Mission School District pre-kindergarten students must:

- » Live within the boundaries of the Shawnee Mission School
- » Be 4-years-old on or before August 31 of the year in which they will attend pre-kindergarten.
- » Be independent with toileting.
- Accompany their parents when they enroll.
- » Note: students who are 5-yearsold on or before August 31 are not eligible for pre-kindergarten

Families may enroll between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. in person at any of the schools offering a prekindergarten program. Enrollment for Lenexa Hills, which opens in the fall, will be held at Broken Arrow Elementary School.

Enrollment applications are processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the individual school

## Vision Services Help Students Thrive



eet Jude Nickson. He's 6 years old and one of the district's outstanding kindergarteners. He reads above grade level, enjoys walking to school, and is proud to be a Trailwood Elementary cup-stacking champion.

He also competed in the Braille Challenge. Jude was born blind. In his short elementary career, he has thrived. His mother, Joanna Nickson, attributes much of his success to the Shawnee Mission School District's special education department that supports students who are blind or visually impaired. They ensure every child achieves their highest potential.

A team of educators and the district's special education department led by Jackie Chatman, director of special education, created an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for Jude long before he began school.

"They were awesome from the onset in providing outstanding services and resources personalized for Jude," Nickson said. As Jude grew in school, the support continued.

"I was so impressed when the vision teachers met with staff

members at Trailwood to help customize Jude's learning and to help integrate him into his kindergarten classroom," said Nickson. "They even met with Jude's classmates and worked with them to help them understand blindness and how they could support Jude."

These efforts were all about building a community to encourage Jude's success. It takes a team - one that draws upon a variety of professionals – to help students with special needs succeed in school.

**Shawnee Mission School** District has one of the largest enrollments of visually impaired and blind students in the greater metro area.

"We are fortunate to have three full-time teachers, an orientation and mobility specialist and six braillists," Chatman said. "The teachers work with students who are legally blind and with those who have low vision. We provide support and services for students in pre-kindergarten through age 21. Our program is funded with state and school district dollars."

#### Orientation and mobility specialist helps students navigate their world

Mark Craig, orientation and mobility specialist, works with students to help them move through their home and schools. As they grow, he helps them learn how to handle other tasks like public transportation and grocery shopping. He began to work with Jude when Jude was 4 years old.

Craig helps him to navigate different areas of Trailwood. On a recent visit, they traveled down the hall to the elevator, up to the second floor and down the main staircase. Throughout the lesson, Craig gave encouragement, reinforcement and verbal cues to ensure Jude's success.

Each session helps Jude practice behaviors that a person who has sight may take for granted, such as facing a person while you speak and how to know when elevator doors open.

Craig, who began his career teaching physical education, has worked with students like Jude for 15 years. He pursued the specialty of orientation and mobility so he could provide more focused and interactive teaching.

"I enjoy opening up opportunities for my students. This training helps provide them safety and independence when



they can get around efficiently," Craig said.

Each time a student reaches a new level of independence it marks a successful moment for Craig and the student. Recently, he worked with a high school student who is blind and taking a class at Johnson County Community College. As a result of Craig's lessons, the student rides a bus to campus and independently navigates her way to class.

#### One-on-one teaching leads to independent students

Jeri Hile, full-time teacher for students who are blind or have visual impairments, enjoys helping students become more independent. It's an interest that began at an early age when she volunteered at a camp for children who are blind. She learned braille at a young age, pursuing a curiosity the way some students may study a foreign language or sign language.

She works one-on-one with students in a variety of subjects. "Much of what we learn is presented visually. For instance, math is the most difficult subject to teach, as the concepts are taught primarily in a visual way." She uses a variety of techniques from an abacus to iPads to help explain the concepts.

In recent years, Hile and her colleagues have introduced students to new technology, available through the district's digital learning initiative, to assist student learning. For some students, the zoom function has assisted by allowing them to see items on their computer screens. Other students have been assisted by technology that narrates for them and/or a braille display that connects to their computer.

"The 1:1 digital implementation has been good in that the students have gained experience with mainstream technology and have gotten a lot of experience using it," Hile said. "All of the students who are blind or low vision have increased their computer/iPad skills."

Hile currently works with Ajay Lohr, an eighth-grader at Westridge. Ajay's favorite subject is social studies and he serves on the student council. Recently, they were working on graphing and the Pythagorean Theorem.

"Students are integrated into the classroom because along with academics, we want to support their learning of social skills, daily living skills and using technology," said Hile.

Abigail Chappell, who teaches students who are blind or who have visual impairments, was inspired to serve students with special needs while she was a Shawnee Mission student. One of her best friends in middle school was blind. After graduating and pursuing a degree, she returned to Shawnee Mission School District. She said the district provides high-quality service to its students, including providing a braillist in each school where a student who is blind attends.

"These individuals provide personalized resources for each of our students," Chappell said.

"Personalized learning helps each student succeed and be his or her best."

#### Their Success is Our Success

Many of our students who are blind or have visual impairments participate in an annual Braille Challenge. The event provides a friendly way for students to have fun while building their skills. They practice braille reading speed and accuracy, spelling, reading comprehension, proofreading, and reading charts and graphs.

Shawnee Mission students regularly finish at the regional competition with top honors. Ashlee Thao, senior at SM South and Audrey Bethay, a seventh-grader at Indian Hills Middle School, have qualified for the national competition several times. Bethay was named champion in her age group twice at nationals - once in the Apprentice Category (firstand second-graders) and again last year in the competition's Sophomore Category (fifth and sixth graders). The students work hard to prepare and seem to really enjoy it, Hile said.

"I think it's been a great opportunity for these students to compete in a challenging competition, which they don't get a lot of chances to do and also be around other students who read braille and use canes," Hile said. "The boost to their self-esteem is immeasurable."

This year, the vision staff will celebrate the high school graduation of three seniors, who are all planning to go to college.

"I'm so very proud

Jude works on a reading lesson with Abigail Chapell vision specialist.

of our team. I don't think our community is aware that the Shawnee Mission School's vision program is easily one of the best in the nation. We have highly qualified and dedicated teachers and braillists," said Chatman. "We are making a difference and meeting the needs of this unique population of students."



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### Health Clinic Opens at Merriam Park

Welcomes All Shawnee Mission School District Students

visit to the doctor when her son felt ill used to mean taking time off work and taking him out of school. Now parent Gloria Hastings has another option. She can make a doctor's appointment for her son at his school. For all Shawnee Mission School District students, the doctor is in at Merriam Park Elementary School.

"This is making health and wellness visits much easier on parents and children," Hastings said.

In collaboration with Health Partnership Clinic, the Shawnee Mission School District opened a new school-based clinic, welcoming walk-in students on Tuesdays and by appointment on Wednesdays.

The new space provides one more option for families, Chaussee Druen, Merriam Park principal said. While it may seem like a unique concept to have a health clinic in a school, it's becoming more common across the country as another way a school can take care of the whole child.

"If students are sitting in the classroom and not feeling well, they're not learning," Druen, said. "It comes down to taking care of the child so they can learn."

The clinic offers pediatric-focused care to treat most health conditions that impact children. A key goal for offering the clinic is to break down barriers to health care, Shelby Rebeck, coordinator for health services for the Shawnee Mission School District said.

"Barriers for many of our students could include low income, lack of transportation, lack of awareness, and parents' or guardians' inability to take time away from work," she added.

The clinic accepts KanCare/Medicaid, commercial insurance and uninsured patients. A sliding fee program also is available to those who qualify.

Many parents have expressed words of thanks about the clinic, Dr. Anne VanGarsse, a physician who serves at the clinic said.

"Our clinic is based on a model of care designed to meet patient needs where they are, and in this case, that means meeting them at school."

As a teacher at Hocker Grove, Heidi Walker said she's already recommended the clinic as a resource to families. Not only does it help make sure students' basic needs are met, it's also a way to provide a caring environment to students and their family members.

"I think this is one more thing that helps students feel safe, protected and at home at school," Walker said. "They know that while they are at school that the school is going to try everything possible to help them be their best."

The clinic is open only to Shawnee Mission School District Students

**Merriam Park Elementary School** 6100 Mastin St Merriam, KS 66203

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by Anne VanGarsse, MD, FAAP, CHCEF, CPE, Health Partnership Clinic's chief health officer, in the clinic





## Summer Programs Offer Variety for All Ages

#### **Summer Enrichment**

Shawnee Mission School District is proud to host a summer enrichment program that's been successful for more than 30 years. Children return year after year to enjoy the interaction and stimulation provided by this enriching format. The program is designed for students entering grades one through eight in the fall of 2018. Classes are varied and include art, music, technology, science, and theatre.

Summer Enrichment, held this year at Shawnee Mission South, allows children to remain engaged throughout the summer through a variety of activities in a safe and structured environment. It also supports working families as children can arrive at 7:30 a.m. for early care. Then the children can eat lunch, play at recess, and take an afternoon class. Late care is offered following the afternoon sessions until 5:30 p.m. Families can also select only a half day of activities.

All children, even if they don't live inside district boundaries, are welcome to enroll.

#### Middle School Band Blast

The Shawnee Mission Summer Band Blast is a one-week camp experience designed for current fifth- through eighth-grade band students. It's a mix of band rehearsals, small ensembles, and sectionals that give players of different skill level an opportunity

to improve their skills in each of these settings.

All classes are taught by highly qualified professionals at Shawnee Mission West. This camp is not open to students completely new to band.

#### Summer Lunch Bunch

Summer Lunch Bunch provides a free lunch to any child ages 1-18 years old. Children do not have to be students in our district to come for lunch. All children are welcome.



The program is federally funded. Questions can be directed to the food service office at 913-993-9710.

Dates: June 4 – July 27 (closed on July 4)

Time: 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Elementary School Locations: ApacheIS, Broken Arrow, Comanche, Crestview, Merriam Park, Nieman, Overland

Park, Rising Star, Rosehill and Shawanoe

#### **Jump Start**

With financial support from the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation, the Shawnee Mission School District offers a summer program to help qualifying incoming kindergarten students get ready for the upcoming school year.

Jump Start is offered during three weeks in July. Students who qualify spend time learning English, math and other skills they need to help them become successful students. They work with their future teacher, allowing that important relationship to take root.

Participants who qualify for Summer 2018 Jump Start are identified during Kindergarten Roundup. Interested parents should contact the school near their home to learn more.

#### **Enrollment**

Summer Enrichment and Summer Band Blast enrollment is currently open until class is full or

#### Ways to Enroll:

- » Online at http://summerschool.smsd.org
- » At the Summer Programs Office:

Broadmoor Technical Center 6701 West 83rd Street Shawnee Mission, KS 66204

#### Hours:

Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (Closed at from noon to 1 p.m.) 913-993-9412

### Shawnee Mission Education Foundation Corporate Council

n Shawnee Mission, our goal is to prepare students to be college and career ready and become successful, productive community members. We know that collaboration between innovative educators and business leaders allows our students to develop the 21st Century skills so desired in the workforce of the future.

The Shawnee Mission Education Foundation Corporate Council, a group of Johnson County and Kansas City metropolitan businesses, recognizes the importance of public education to current employees and their families. Council members understand that public education plays a major role in developing an innovative workforce and making the community a vibrant and safe place to live, work and learn.

The Corporate Council provides financial support through the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation and helps fund important programs focused on STEM, arts, and early childhood education initiatives.

Corporate Council members provide expertise and advice to the foundation and the district regarding Signature Programs and community engagement. They advocate for public education in the community and they encourage employee involvement in foundation and district activities.

"In order to educate the leaders of tomorrow, we need the support and advice of the corporate community," said Leo Nunnink, chairman of the Corporate Council Steering Committee and senior vice president of Commercial Banking with UMB. "We are grateful to the many businesses who have reinforced their commitment to Shawnee Mission with their membership in the Corporate Council."

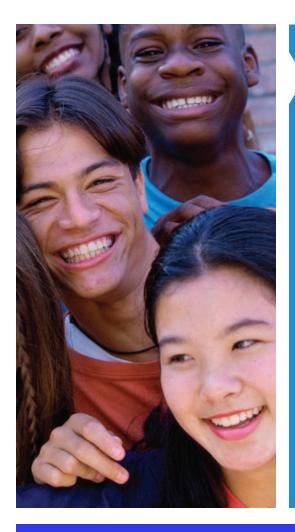
In addition to helping students succeed, members of the Corporate Council enjoy exclusive benefits, networking and marketing opportunities.

For more information about joining the Corporate Council, please visit www.smef.org or email Kim Hinkle, executive director, at kimberlyhinkle@smsd.org.

#### **Proud Corporate Council Fellow Level Members:**







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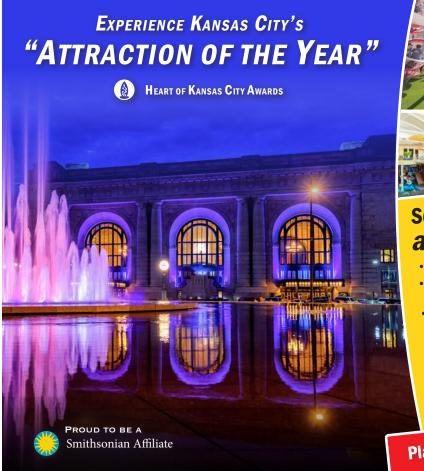
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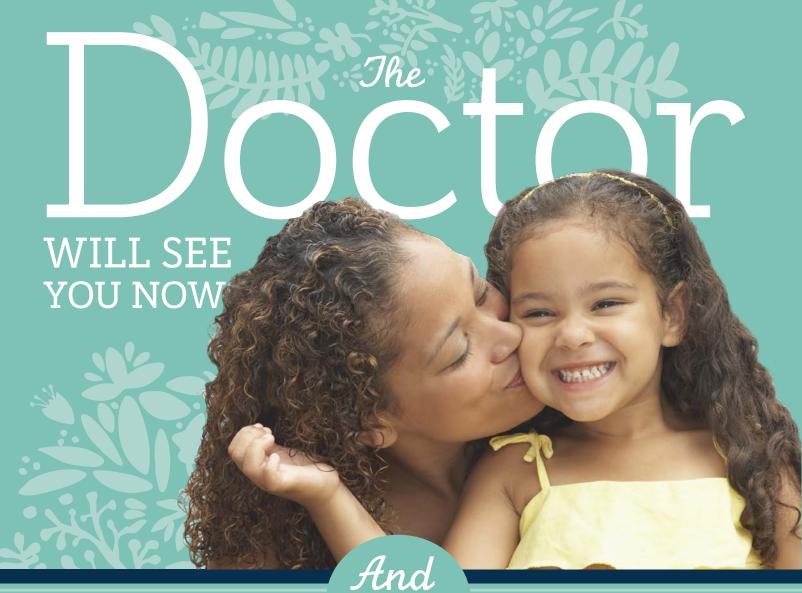
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