



New community health clinics bring services to where kids are — inside schools



Riverview Gardens senior Shakira Bent speaks with medical assistant Ebonie Hearn-Tolliver at the makeshift student health clinic at Riverview Gardens High School.

Two school districts in north St. Louis County are moving beyond the traditional nurse's office and putting full-service health clinics in schools. This week, Hazelwood East High School and Riverview Gardens High School unveiled clinics that will offer primary care as well as dental and behavioral health services for students. Officials at the two schools say bringing doctors to the students – instead of the other way around – is an important step to increasing access on those who need it most. The Christian Hospital Foundation is paying for the first two years of the project. “What better way to have that access than to go where people are?” said Rick Stevens, president of the foundation and Christian Hospital, which is across the street from Hazelwood East. The foundation began looking at school-based health centers as a public health tool after researchers from Washington University and St. Louis University published the massive [For the Sake of All](#) report in 2014. The report outlined health disparities between residents in St. Louis' predominantly black areas in the north and predominantly white areas to the south. For the Sake of All also drew a connection between [poor health and dropout numbers](#). Chronic childhood illnesses such as asthma and untreated mental health issues can lead a student to struggle in school and eventually drop out, which in turn can lead to other risky health behaviors and poor health outcomes, according to the report. “If you're sick you're not coming to school, if you have this chronic illness you deal with a shortness of breath you don't have a normal lifestyle like the other kids,” Stevens said. “There might be some things you might want to participate in, like sports, but it's holding you back. What we want to give people opportunity that doesn't hold them back.” The two clinics will serve more than 2,500 students across the Hazelwood and Riverview Gardens school districts. Physicians and nurse practitioners from the community health center CareSTL Health will staff the clinics (doctors will be on site certain days of the week.) The clinics will function much like traditional community health centers, offering across-the-board services to students regardless of their insurance or financial status. The pediatricians and nurse practitioners will, for example, give immunizations, give children physicals, or treat asthma, said Regina Askew, behavioral health director for CareSTL. “We have licensed clinical behavioral health consultants that are trained in diagnosing mental health disorders and also providing counseling right on staff,” she said, adding many students in the system may be dealing with undiagnosed trauma and homelessness. School officials say they may expand the program to include sexual health screenings and education and hope to someday offer care to family and faculty as well as students. The neighborhoods where the two clinics are opening have some of the highest rates of poverty and uninsured rates in the St. Louis area. North St. Louis and north St. Louis County also have some of the lowest health outcomes, such as high rates of cancer and heart disease, according to the Missouri Information for Community Assessment database. Such factors put together can mean students and their parents have a hard time making it to the doctor, Askew said. “If they take off work they don't get paid, because they don't have the vacation time,” Askew said. “If they take off work to take their child to their doctor, then that's some more funds they don't have available for their household.” Meeting students where they already are – at school – removes that burden, Askew said.

West defeats Central; Roosevelt tops DuBourg in first round playoffs



Hazelwood Central free safety Kayden Jackson (16) attempts to bring down Hazelwood West quarterback Darius Cooper (8) during their contest Saturday, October 27, 2018. The Wildcats of West went on to defeat the Hawks of Central 20-14.

It was a case of turnaround is fair play for the Hazelwood West Wildcats in their Class 6 District 1 first-round playoff game against Hazelwood Central.

On September 17, Hazelwood West bolted to an early 12-0 lead, only to see the Hawks stage a fourth-quarter rally to defeat the Wildcats 15-12.

Last Saturday, the shoe was on the other foot as host Hazelwood Central took an early 14-0 lead in the playoff showdown. Only this time, it was Hazelwood West staging the big rally as they scored 20 unanswered points to end a 14-game losing streak to its district rivals.

Junior quarterback Darius Cooper had a big offensive performance to lead the Wildcats as he amassed nearly 300 yards of total offense. Cooper passed for 177 yards and one touchdown and rushed for 120 yards on 20 carries.

The district playoff victory concluded a big two-week stretch for the Wildcats against their Hazelwood School District brethren. The week before defeating Hazelwood Central, the Wildcats defeated Hazelwood East 36-12 in the final game of the regular season.

Hazelwood West will visit a powerhouse CBC squad on Friday night in the semifinals of the District 1 playoffs at 7 p.m.