

# School system opens second health center

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MIDDLETOWN — The school district formally opened its second school-based health center Thursday and speakers called the center a miracle that will change students lives.

Three weeks into the school year the clinic at Woodrow Wilson Middle School has already come close to its target enrollment for the whole academic year with 45 percent of students signed up.

The clinic was dedicated to Willard R. McRae, in honor of his many years of service to Middletown in the health field and youth work.

With a staff of four, the clinic offers on-site treatment for day-to-day illnesses, sports injuries, the management of acute and chronic illnesses such as asthma and diabetes.

In addition, the center will help students with anger management, conflict resolution and depression.

"It is providing an essential service here," said Frank Balisciano, Woodrow Wilson principal.

Superintendent David H. Larson went even further.

"In my heart and in my mind I know that the health clinic we have opened here has the power to change people's lives," he said.

"We have seen it change the lives of students at Macdonough School," he added.

Macdonough, whose clinic received state funding in 1992, has seen a 10 percent increase in attendance. Last year the clinic had an enrollment rate of 99 percent, with only eight students not signed up.

Parental permission is necessary for students to be treated by the clinics. That was one of the factors that reassured the school board when it voted for the Woodrow Wilson project.

Another factor was Larson's assurance that the clinic would not distribute contraceptives or information on abortions. Those issues have derailed school-based clinics in other communities.

Despite worries, even the older students at Woodrow Wilson are using the clinic, according to manager Jesse White-Frese.

The staff is comprised of nurse practitioner Debi McGrath, social worker Angela Mazur, outreach worker Kelly Bradway and medical assistant Tonya King.

The clinic is funded by a state grant of \$100,000 from a pot of \$1.3 million for such projects across the state. Both city clinics are managed by Community Health Center.

"The thing that most comes to my mind this afternoon is what miracles can happen," said John F. Shaw, chairman of the school board.

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