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News

## Community Health Center opens first clinic in state tech school (with video)

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MIDDLETOWN — Vinal Technical School students and administrators along with city and state delegates joined representatives from Community Health Center Tuesday morning to officially open a new, state-of-the-art health clinic in the school.

Community Health Center has been providing health services in some public schools since it was founded in 1972, but Tuesday's grand opening of the clinic at Vinal, marked with a ceremonial ribbon cutting, is the first such clinic established in a state technical school, according to Eliza Cole, a spokesman for CHC.

CHC will also provide mobile dental care twice per year and the organization hopes to offer behavioral health services by next fall, Cole said.

"You have an exciting career ahead of you and we're excited about the work you're going to do," Mark Masselli, president and CEO of Community Health Center, told about a dozen students on hand for the ceremony.

"We want you to think about CHC no matter what you choose to do, whatever your field is because we need to be partners with all of our community. We are engaged with our business community in town, the chamber of commerce, small business. They need the work we're doing. S when you go out and lead your organization, remember to partner up with Community Health Center," he said.

Mayor Dan Drew called Vinal and CHC "two of the most vibrant organizations in the community."

"This day represents the marriage of those two organizations. They are both focused on service to the public and to help people. It's going to be good for the students and the community in Middletown," he said, before extending his congratulations on behalf of the city.

State Sen.Len Suzio, R-Meriden, called the clinic a "good addition to Vinal," after having seen the success of a similar clinic in the Meriden school system while serving on the Meriden Board of Education.

“The clinic in Meriden has been serving needy kids for five or six years now. The experience has been fantastic and we’re happy with the service for kids who otherwise may not get it. Vinal Tech is very fortunate,” he said.

State Rep. Matt Lesser, D-Middletown, said he was excited to participate in the ceremony.

“After 40 years a clinic is finally being opened at Vinal. I need to ask, how did it take so long?” he said in jest. “But I’m glad it’s here.”

“Vinal is a great school that provides a quality education and Community Health Center is an outstanding organization. I’m pleased they’re meeting the needs of our children,” he said.

He then read a proclamation from the state general assembly, congratulating and thanking Vinal and CHC.

“It’s hard to believe the number and scope of services they are offering,” said Rich Shellman, principal of Vinal Tech, of the new clinic. “We have an incredible school nurse, but now we have people on staff who can diagnose and treat health issues. Now parents don’t have to worry about making appointments and taking time off for trips to the doctor, so it will keep kids in school. Physicals can be done right here. It’s a great resource,” he said.

Debora Ismail is Vinal’s school nurse.

Jennifer Hill, a nurse practitioner, and registered nurse Sara Cerrone, will be staffing the new clinic.

Hill previously worked for the Children’s Medical Center in Hartford and Carrone previously worked for County OBGYN based out of New Haven.

Pat Ciccone, superintendent of the state’s technical high schools, thanked CHC for providing health services at the

school.

"We're trying to open one in all the [technical high] schools," he said. "We're gaining ground. Coming together with this partnership is important to students."

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