

City wins funds for 2nd school clinic

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MIDDLETOWN — Middletown has won funding from the state for a second, school-based health clinic. Woodrow Wilson Middle School will house the new facility, joining Macdonough School.

The \$100,000 for the project comes from a pool of \$1.3 million in state funds earmarked for clinics. The center will be run by the Community Health Center.

"We will be able head off some of the interferences that provide the obstacles to students when they come to school," predicted a happy Woodrow Wilson Principal Frank Balisciano.

Balisciano explained Tuesday that the

clinical director, wrote the grant application. "I'm thrilled. We have the experience from doing the Macdonough clinic and I think in some ways it was good getting our feet wet with a small school. Woodrow Wilson is quite a bit bigger," Flinter said.

"It's a very important age group. When you look at seventh- and eighth-graders you are looking at kids who are forming their life-long health habits," she commented and added that it was important that this clinic will have an effect on students from all over Middletown. She predicted the clinic will have "an impact on the health of the whole city," reaching beyond the students to their families as well.

Balisciano agreed. "This is the hotspot,

center will be home to a nurse practitioner who will deal with the day-to-day illnesses and also be able to provide sports physicals and other medical services. He said there would also be a "mental health component with an additional social worker and an outreach worker. That will allow us to extend tentacles into the community after 2:40 p.m.," he stated.

The Rita Hayes School Based Wellness Center has operated at Macdonough School since January last year and the success of the program encouraged the school district and Community Health Center to transfer the idea to the middle school.

Superintendent of Schools David H. Larson called the funding "a real plus. To have

this is where the action is," he said. "It is a turning point."

The physical and mental growth of students coupled with inquisitiveness and experimentation make it a difficult age, he explained. Balisciano applauded the wellness clinic as a way to tackle those problems head on with prevention rather than reacting once it is too late.

An advisory committee began to consider extending the concept to the middle school in January and won board of education support for the application on June 21. At that meeting Pamela Muraca, the principal of Macdonough School, told the board-center had already conferred benefits in its

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Community Health Center

more resources for students, for parents, for teachers will help in working through the issues," he said.

Margaret Flinter, the health center's

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five months of operation.

The board voted unanimously to support the proposal after Larson stated categorically that the clinic would not distribute contraceptives or provide information on abortion and that parental permission was required for students to use the clinic. Those guarantees assuaged the concerns of Board Member Marie Coughlin while Muraca's observation that the clinic diminishes the number of school days students miss won over Board Member Edward McMillan.

The advisory committee developed a student survey designed to discover if there was a need for additional services, what those needs were if they existed and how a wellness center would affect existing services. Two hundred and fifty-eight students responded to the survey. In addition information from the nurse's log was used.

The summary to the report presented to the board identified a student health profile with a need for a wellness clinic. "The information presented clearly identifies the need for preventive and interventive health care for middle school students which is comprehensive in scope," the report reads. "This need is consistent with providing a strong rationale for the expansion of school

based health services to Keigwin and Woodrow Wilson."

The wellness clinic will join the after-school program at Woodrow Wilson as new programs at the school this year. When the middle school beat out competition from city elementary schools for the after-hours funding, the selection committee commented that middle school students had unique needs that had to be addressed.

Already established are the innovative Excel program which is an extension of the highly-regarded Upward Bound project run by Wesleyan University and local school districts. "There are a lot of resources we have been able to muster for our adolescent population," Larson stated.