



News Release

Office of Communications



August 3, 2017

MEDIA CONTACT: [Sharifah Sims-Williams](#), Communications, 314-493-0438

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community Partnership Creates New Health Center at Normandy High School

NORMANDY, MO -- Members of the media and the public are invited to attend a ribbon cutting to celebrate a new school-based health center on the campus of Normandy High School.

When: 10 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 31

Where: Normandy High School – North Hall, 6701 St Charles Rock Rd, St. Louis, MO 63133

The health center will begin serving students Aug. 10 and will be available to Normandy Schools Collaborative youth and staff. Private insurance and Medicaid will be accepted; students will not be turned away due to an inability to pay. Initially the health center will operate on Mondays and Thursdays.

The center is the result of a partnership between St. Louis organizations in the fields of education, health, youth development and social work. The center aims to increase access to primary and behavioral health care in the Normandy schools community, improve student attendance and academic achievement, and help students improve their health and wellness.

“We are incredibly excited about the short- and long-term benefits of this project,” said Charles Pearson, superintendent of the Normandy Schools Collaborative. “Research has shown that young people are less likely to miss school due to illness when they have access to affordable healthcare options. We hope that with a resource like this conveniently located on one of our campuses, our families get needed health services, but also eliminate a barrier that can keep some students out of school. This collaboration can have a direct, positive impact on the entire community.”

Partners in the collaboration are:

- **Affinia Healthcare**, a federally qualified community health center, which will be operating the health center located at Normandy High. Affinia Healthcare (formerly Grace Hill Health Centers) provides affordable primary and preventive health care services to residents of St. Louis and surrounding areas. This nonprofit has operated in St. Louis since 1906.
- **BJC HealthCare**, the area’s largest health care provider, will provide in-kind donations to the clinic, including furnishings and medical supplies.
- **For the Sake of All**, the groundbreaking, multidisciplinary project on the health and well-being of African Americans in St. Louis. Beginning in 2016, For the Sake of All formed a workgroup to facilitate key partnerships among the education and health sectors. The group is working to increase



sustainable school-based health centers in the region. For the Sake of All further conducted a needs assessment to inform the planning and design of the school-based health center at Normandy High School.

- **Normandy Schools Collaborative**, the public school district for 23 communities in north St. Louis County serving more than 3,200 students in preschool through grade 12.
- **Wyman**, which seeks to empower teens from economically disadvantaged circumstances to lead successful lives and build strong communities. Wyman worked alongside the Normandy Schools Collaborative this year to develop a system-wide solution to align more than 20 partners serving the district to help the Collaborative achieve better outcomes, with greater efficiency, for students and the community. A result of this work is the introduction and strategic alliance between the partners involved in the new health center.

“Our organization is extremely delighted to participate in this important initiative, operating a health center that helps serve the primary care needs of students and others who seek our services,” said Alan Freeman, president and CEO of Affinia Healthcare.

There are more than 2,300 school-based health centers in the United States. They provide behavioral, mental and physical health services and have been proven to increase access to health care and improve health care costs, health outcomes and academic outcomes.

With the addition of Normandy, there are now three school-based health centers operating in high schools in the St. Louis region. Creating more sustainable school-based health centers remains a key objective in For the Sake of All’s recommendations to solve health inequities among African Americans in St. Louis.

“Our first step in launching the project included a critical needs assessment among the members of the community to help determine which services the health center will provide,” said Jason Purnell, associate professor at the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis and director of For the Sake of All. “We found students and families have significant barriers to health care and numerous health and behavioral health needs. There was overwhelming support among students, staff, and parents to provide consistent, accessible health care services within the high school.”

“At Wyman, we believe that every young person has the potential to succeed and lead, regardless of life circumstances,” said Claire Wyneken, Wyman’s president and CEO. “With such committed and expert partners at the table, we’re laying a foundation that will create equitable opportunities for youth to succeed.”

Normandy Schools Collaborative enrolls about 3,200 students annually and draws from 23 different municipalities in the 63121 and 63133 zip codes. Nearly half of the area’s youth, 48 percent, live in poverty, almost three times the youth poverty rate in St. Louis County.

Several members of the collaboration are available for interviews with the media:

Alan Freeman, president and CEO Affinia Healthcare: 314-814-8511

Kendra Holmes, COO, Affinia Healthcare: 314-814-8638

Charles Pearson, superintendent, Normandy Schools Collaborative: 314-493-0438

Jason Purnell, director, For the Sake of All: 314-608-3958

Claire Wyneken, CEO and president, Wyman: 314-630-5459

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NORMANDY HIGH SCHOOL SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTER FACT SHEET

Research suggests full-service primary care health centers based in schools

- Increase student attendance
- Decrease school drop-out rates
- Enhance academic performance
- Decrease barriers to healthcare so youth get services when they need them
- Enable youth to improve their health and wellness

Demographics

- Normandy Schools Collaborative enrolls about 3,200 students from 23 different municipalities in north St. Louis County; 97 percent are African-American.
- 97 percent of students qualify for free lunch.
- 48 percent of youth in the school district's boundaries live in poverty, versus 16 percent of youth in St. Louis County as a whole.

Normandy school-based health center needs assessment

- 85 percent of Normandy High School students said they would utilize a school-based health center if available.
- Parents, students and staff overwhelmingly reported a lack of convenient access to local, affordable health care. This, combined with a lack of transportation, caused significant barriers to health care which affected student school attendance: *"They have to miss the whole day of school because they have a doctor's appointment,"* said one Normandy High School staff member.
- Parents reported nearby health care clinics were overbooked, and families had to wait weeks or months for an appointment: *"And we do want someone that's going to actually follow the care of our child,"* said one parent.
- Youths living in the Normandy Schools Collaborative had more than double the E.R. visit rate than youths in St. Louis County as a whole, due in part to a lack of local, primary care.
- Parents and staff particularly cited a lack of accessible mental and behavioral health services in nearby communities: *"The services that will probably be in Clayton and Chesterfield are not here, because people here can't afford those services,"* said one parent.
- Behavioral health support was cited as a need by parents and school staff because of trauma and poverty issues in homes.
- In surveys, students reported significant need for mental health and wellness services: About a quarter of Normandy High School students reported being worried about the future, having trouble sleeping at night, or feeling sad.

*Sources: For the Sake of All's Discussion Guide on investing in school health:

<http://tiny.cc/FSOASchoolHealth>; Normandy School Based Health Center Needs Assessment Report, April 2017. Prepared by: Jason Q. Purnell, PhD, MPH and For the Sake of All.