

Healthy classroom



Shelbyville Central Schools Superintendent David Adams (left) has his blood pressure checked by Dr. James Springer at the SCS Employee Health Clinic at the Shelbyville Middle School. (Dayla Thurston photo)

Clinics for SCS employees, students promote improved teaching, learning potential

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It is hard for sick children to learn and just as hard for sick faculty members to teach, but Shelbyville Central Schools is addressing the problem through its new Wellness Center at the Shelbyville Middle School.

Interested community members are invited to an open house tour of the facility, beginning with a ribbon cutting and opening remarks in the SMS cafetorium at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday.

The Shelbyville Central Schools Employee Health Clinic opened on Aug. 12 through a partnership between the school system and OnSiteSolutions, a Major Health Partner, to offer free primary-care services, medications and prescriptions to benefit all SCS employees who sign up for the school health insurance. It is staffed by Dr. James Springer and physician's assistant Stan Rice and already has provided services to 174 patients.

The Student Health Clinic shares space at SMS with the employee clinic, but it is funded through state grants and sponsored by Community Health Network and will offer free care for all Shelbyville Central Schools' students through a nurse practitioner, Pamela Corrall, with Dr. John Fleming as medical director of the student clinic. Kim Owens, administrative and public relations for SCS, and David Adams, superintendent of SCS, both stressed that taxpayer money is not being used to finance either clinic.

The renovations to unused classroom space at SMS that created the roomy clinic were paid for by SCS's health insurance company, Central Indiana School Employees Insurance Trust, a group of five different school corporations.

According to Mike Shreves, business manager for the school system, the clinic for employees will hopefully lead to lower health insurance premiums for the school system because the convenience of the clinic will encourage employees to seek solutions to their health concerns sooner and avoid more serious illnesses.

Ryan Claxton, director of business development for Major Health Partners, said that OnSiteSolutions hopes to save SCS \$160,000 through "savings from office visits, radiology, productivity, laboratory and prescription drugs."

Adams was quick to add that although saving money is an important factor, the main reason for establishing the clinic for school employees was "to keep SCS employees, especially teachers, healthy and in the classroom helping students get an education."

"We're doing it because we place students first," Adams said. "The less absences teachers have, the better it is for their students in the long run."

Adams added that the clinic is an added benefit that makes employment at SCS more attractive to potential applicants and helps the system retain its teachers. Since any spouse or dependent covered under the employee's insurance can visit the clinic, it is also a benefit to the employee's entire family. The superintendent noted that a teacher who can take his or her sick child to the clinic is less likely to miss a day of teaching.

"Convenience is the most important benefit for many employees," Adams said. "All of us have sat for an hour or more in a doctor's office. We can usually get you into the clinic the same day that you call."

The employee clinic is open on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 2 to 5 p.m. and Friday from 6 to 10 a.m. and is closed on Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday, so employees need to make an appointment; it is not set up as a walk-in clinic.

In addition to access to Dr. Springer and Rice, school employees may also receive a number of free prescriptions from the pharmacy located within the clinic. It offers more than 230 different non-narcotic medications.

When employees are suffering from serious problems that cannot be treated at the clinic, they can visit the physician of their choice and pay the traditional co-pay required by their insurance plan. The clinic simply presents another health-care choice; employees are not required to use it.

The student component of the clinic, Shelbyville Central Schools Wellness Center, also is rooted in a desire to keep students healthy and in school. Many families in the Shelbyville Central district are struggling financially with at least 50 percent of the children in two of the system's schools on free and reduced lunches. It follows that many of these children are without health insurance, and some families are unable to pay for visits to the doctor.

"We are not trying to take business away from local doctors," Adams said. "We want to fill the health-service gap for kids who don't have medical doctors — kids whose families don't have insurance."

Parents are expected to accompany children to their clinic visits, and appointments are recommended. The hours are 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Monday through Friday during regular school days, following the school calendar, and some appointments are available after school hours.

For more information on the SCS Wellness Center, visit the school Web site at www.shelbycs.org.