



Petersburg School-based Health Center Moves Toward Launch

New facility at Petersburg High School projected to open during 2020-21 school year

Petersburg, Va. (June 11, 2020) – As a tumultuous school year draws to a close, a United Way led partnership is making major steps to ensure students' health and well-being upon their return.

This spring, United Way's Petersburg City and Schools Partnership celebrated a major milestone in its effort to open The Crimson Clinic, a school-based health center at Petersburg High School.

The Petersburg City Public Schools Board voted on March 4 to approve plans for the school-based health center and school leaders signed a memorandum of understanding shortly thereafter. This means the project will continue moving forward with an anticipated opening during the 2020-21 school year.

"Now more than ever, we recognize that the health of students and families is critical to their ability to succeed at school and in life. While the past school year was difficult and the future is uncertain, we know students will return to school at some point," said James Taylor, president & CEO of United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg. "When that happens, the school-based health center will provide critical services to students and families, which will have a lasting impact on their path to success."

A school-based health center is a shared commitment between a community's schools and healthcare organizations to support students' health, well-being and academic success by providing preventative and treatment services where students are: in school.

"The school-based health center is a positive intervention that will disrupt inequity and provide families with the necessary support to boost health and academic outcomes," said Dr. Maria Pitre-Martin, Superintendent of Petersburg City Public Schools.

Central Virginia Health Services (CVHS), a nonprofit federally qualified community health center, will serve as the clinic's medical provider. Through the school-based health center, CVHS will provide primary care, as well as behavioral health services.

"We are excited to be partnering with the Petersburg school system and local organizations to provide services to help the students succeed in school and beyond," said Paula Tomko, CEO of CVHS. "Health centers have responded to community needs since the inception of the program in 1965. This partnership is an example of how we are able to collaborate and respond to issues in our community today."

CVHS is Virginia's oldest and largest network of community health centers across the state and will celebrate 50 years of serving Virginia in November. CVHS currently operates three health centers in the Tri-Cities area, two in Petersburg and one in Hopewell.

Early stages of the project were funded jointly by The Cameron Foundation and Virginia Premier. The Cameron Foundation supported the technical assistance needed to plan, implement and manage the center, and Virginia Premier funded the project management and provided branding for The Crimson Clinic. National expertise was brought in from the School Based Health Alliance to facilitate the stages of work based on best practices in school-based health care. The process was led by the Petersburg City and School Partnership's Student Health and Well-Being workgroup, co-chaired by Dr. Alton Hart, District Health Director for the Crater District Health Departments/Virginia Department of Health, and Theresa Caldwell, Board Chair of the Petersburg Wellness Consortium.

With plans now in place to move forward with creating the center, The Cameron Foundation has made a new award of \$150,000 towards construction costs.

"This is an evidence-based strategy to mitigate barriers for children and their families to be able to access health care," said J. Todd Graham, President of The Cameron Foundation. "Chronic conditions, such as asthma, can lead to higher absenteeism from school and contribute to poorer academic outcomes. Having this intervention onsite at the high school will provide families with better resources to support the health of their children, as well as their academic success."

This project also is generously supported by the dedicated members of United Way's Alexis de Tocqueville Society.

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