



Nightingale

Affinia Healthcare receives full accreditation for new Family Medicine Residency Program

Affinia Healthcare has earned full accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) for its Family Medicine Residency Program.

This is the final step in establishing the program and now allows for the recruitment of future professionals to serve in communities facing declining healthcare options.

“North St. Louis County faces a critical shortage of primary care services, with an estimated 75 percent of low-income residents lacking a healthcare home,” said Dr. Melissa Tepe, Affinia Healthcare VP and Chief Medical Officer. “The region struggles with some of the worst health indicators in Missouri — including high rates of infant and maternal mortality, chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension, and poor

access to mental health and substance use care.”

The newly ACGME-accredited Affinia Family Medicine Residency (which will be based at the Affinia Healthcare

location in Ferguson) stands as a vital and timely response to this crisis. As a Teaching Health Center program embedded within a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), it is designed to train physicians in the very neighborhoods where care is most urgently needed.

“Graduates of such programs are significantly more likely to practice primary care, remain in underserved communities, and offer integrated services such as behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment,” said Dr. Kenneth Hemba, Affinia Healthcare Family Medicine Residency Program Director.

See **Residency**, cont'd on page 4



The Family Medicine Residency Program team members are (from left): Dr. Kristia Abernathy, Dr. Kenneth Hemba, Program Director; Laura Bush, Program Manager; Dr. Mirihet Bilehu, and Dr. Alexa Arastoo.

Affinia Healthcare earns 100 percent on HRSA survey

Affinia Healthcare has earned a score of 100 percent on a recent operational review by the Health Services and Resources Administration (HRSA).

HRSA surveyors recently conducted a site visit at Affinia Healthcare to review critical operational areas to ensure high quality care for patients. With the 100 percent rating, there were no findings or follow-up visits required.

“This is the best OSV outcome our organization has ever received — a testament to our staff’s hard work, dedication, and commitment to our mission,” said Dr.

Kendra Holmes, Affinia Healthcare President & CEO.

“Thank you to everyone who contributed to this process and for the care and service our employees provide every day.”

According to HRSA, a standard, comprehensive Operational Site Visit (OSV) is needed to thoroughly review the financial, clinical, and admin/governance operations to determine whether we are in compliance with Health Center Program requirements. The OSV

See **HRSA**, cont'd on page 3



*Recognizing the excellent service
and accomplishments
of Affinia Healthcare staff!*

Celebrating Excellence, Care & Compassion

CHW of the Year (Urban): Candace Henderson, Director of Community Health, has been selected for the



Henderson

Missouri Community Health Worker of the Year (Urban). According to the American Public Health Association, a community health worker is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served.

Research Fellow: Ebony Hamilton has been

selected as a Fellow in Cohort VIII of the Community Research Fellows Training Program at Washington University. The Community Research Fellows Training Program (CRFT) is a comprehensive 17-week public health research training



Hamilton

course through the Program for the Elimination of Cancer Disparities at Washington University School of Medicine and Siteman Cancer Center.



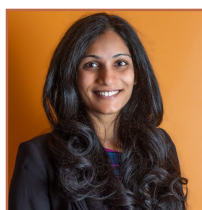
Carr

Young Leader Honoree:

Congratulations to **Christopher Carr**, Community Health Worker -

Perinatal Manager, who received the St. Louis American Foundation 2025 Salute to Young Leaders award! He was recognized for his dedication and impactful work in the community.

CSF Award: The St. Louis County Children's Fund recently honored **Dr. Juee Phalak** with the Dr. John M. Anderson Excellence in Mental Health Award. Dr. Phalak is a psychiatrist and Director of the Affinia Healthcare Behavioral Health department.



Phalak



Congratulations to this quarter's **I Know Quality When I See It** honorees! These individuals, whether they work directly with patients or behind the scenes, have been recognized for making meaningful contributions every day that help support a culture of quality across the organization.

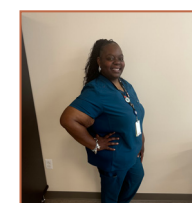
The winners are: **DeAndre Commons**, Unhoused Case Management Coordinator; **Ruther Lemon-Liggins**, Medical Assistant; **Mitra Higgs**, Dental Assistant; **Hadia Jaffery**, Physician Assistant; **Essence Jenkins**, Dental Assistant; **Ranyea Burnett**, Director, Facilities & Maintenance; **Phyllis Miller**, Behavioral Health Counselor.



Commons



Lemon-Liggins



Higgs



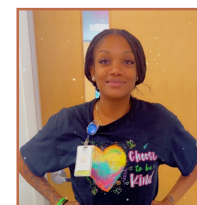
Jaffery



Miller



Burnett



Jenkins



Affinia Healthcare mobilizes to assist residents impacted by May tornado

On May 16, around 2:30 p.m., the St. Louis area experienced the rare phenomenon of a tornado striking within the city limits, reportedly first touching down outside of Clayton, then moving north to the Penrose, Ville and surrounding neighborhoods in West and North St. Louis, leaving a path of destruction and heartache.

The Health Outreach team deployed and started to deliver supplies the following day. In the days following the tornado, Affinia Healthcare Outreach and Community Health Workers have hit the pavement, providing support to residents to help them during this crisis. Affinia Healthcare has also partnered with organizations like Direct Relief to provide supplies to residents and staff impacted by the tornado.

“Thank you for everything you are doing to support our patients, colleagues, and neighbors,” said Dr. Kendra Holmes, Affinia Healthcare President & CEO. “Together, we are St. Louis Strong.”

Some of the ways Affinia Healthcare is supporting relief efforts include:

- Partnering with the St. Louis Housing Authority to share information on senior housing resources for those displaced or in need of safe accommodations.
- Recovery supplies have been made available to Affinia Healthcare staff



Members of the Maternal Health/Community Health teams delivered hygiene kits to residents impacted by the May 16 tornado in St. Louis.

- directly impacted by the storm.
- New pillows, blankets, and cleaning supplies, along with important education on asthma triggers and lead poisoning prevention for pediatric asthma patients.
- Supporting community members and grassroots organizations by distributing diapers, bottled water, masks, and hygiene kits.
- Sharing behavioral health resources and support information to help those coping with trauma and stress.
- Providing food and emergency supplies to seniors in facilities that lost power.
- Going door-to-door to check on residents, offer wellness assessments, and distribute needed resources.
- Providers and clinical staff working diligently to care for patients impacted by the tornado, ensuring they receive timely, compassionate, and comprehensive support during this critical time.

Affinia Healthcare has storm relief resources posted on its website under the News section. To see the available resources, please visit: <https://affiniahealthcare.org/community-resources-for-tornado-relief/>

HRSA *cont'd from page 1*

should also evaluate and provide recommendations for performance improvement as they specifically pertain to the health center's clinical performance.

The site visit occurred over a three-day period in early April. The auditors evaluated multiple areas, including:

- Clinical staffing, services, and patient care
- Financial management and accounting systems
- Governance and board authority

- Emergency preparedness and continuity of care
- Billing, collections, and sliding fee policies
- Quality improvement and compliance procedures

The HRSA team surveyed two Affinia Healthcare locations, 1717 Biddle Street near downtown, and the new Ferguson health center, located at 3396 Pershall Road. The HRSA review occurs every three years. The next review will occur in 2028.



NURSE of the Quarter

SUSAN JONES

Mobile Health Unit Nurse



*Congratulations **Susan Jones**,
Affinia Healthcare Mobile Health Unit Nurse,
Nurse of the Quarter!*

Susan chose a career in nursing because she admired her mother, who was also a nurse. A graduate of Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, she has been a nurse for over 30 years and with Affinia Healthcare for 17 years. "I love being on the mobile unit and seeing all of the kids every day; they always say the darndest things! I also really love my coworkers," she said.

***Congratulations and thank you
for your dedication to our patients!***

www.affiniahealthcare.org



EMPLOYEE of the 1st Quarter

SILVA HICKS

Registered Medical Assistant



Silva has been with Affinia Healthcare for nearly three years and loves working with the patients and her colleagues.

Working in Optometry, she enjoys helping patients with their vision care.

Congratulations!

www.affiniahealthcare.org

Residency *cont'd from page 1*

"By anchoring physician training in the community, Affinia's residency program not only expands access to care but also builds a sustainable pipeline of highly competent providers committed to health access and long-term impact."

The accreditation process, conducted by ACGME's Institutional Review Committee, ensures the residency program meets industry compliance standards. According to ACGME, accreditation is received through a voluntary process and review based on certain industry standards. The accreditation process is thorough to ensure the program meets the standards for specialty practices to prepare graduates.

The Family Medicine Residency program is accepting applications for the 2026 class. The program will focus on Primary Care and Community Medicine (PCCM) experience, spanning all three years of the residency program and focus on outpatient care.

Affinia Healthcare was awarded a grant in 2023 for the residency program to help develop future primary care physicians. Affinia Healthcare is partnering with A.T. Still University, Christian Hospital and SSM Health DePaul Health Center on the residency program.

Affinia Healthcare is the sponsoring institution for this program and received initial accreditation in 2024 which allowed the health center to create the structure of the residency program.

To learn more, visit www.affiniahealthcare.org/family-medicine-residency/.



Affinia Healthcare recognized as ‘What’s Right’ with Region



Affinia Healthcare was one of 20 trailblazing organizations recognized at this year’s What’s Right with the Region awards. The Focus St. Louis program recognizes organizations in several categories, including Promoting Community Health and Well-Being, in which Affinia Healthcare was honored. On hand to accept the recognition was Yvonne Buhlinger, VP, Community Relations & Executive VP, Foundation (right), and Leslie O’Connor, VP/ Chief Financial Officer (center).

Affinia Healthcare awarded \$25,000 grant to support health outreach efforts

Affinia Healthcare has been awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Episcopal Presbyterian Health Trust to support community outreach events for increased access to health care.

“This generous grant supports our continued commitment to delivering essential care to uninsured and underinsured individuals in our community,” said Affinia Healthcare President and CEO Dr. Kendra Holmes.

The funding will support 12 outreach events planned through the remainder of the year, with an opportunity for the grant to be renewed for two additional years.

Outreach events are held to offer Medicaid enrollment and appointment assistance. The outreach team also organizes medical and dental events for adults and children at the various health centers, and a monthly mental health event for men. The grant will help cover expenses related to outreach initiatives including facility and security staffing, incentives, and marketing.

“Our Outreach team works to ensure everyone in the community has access to healthcare by eliminating



Christen Blackmon, Health Outreach Specialist (right), speaks with a member of the community.

barriers like lack of insurance,” said Outreach Director LaDon Meriweather. “Receiving this grant helps us to continue our efforts to ensure anyone who may be eligible to receive Medicaid and access high quality healthcare, can do just that.”

On average, the Outreach Team assists with processing 120 Medicaid applications weekly.

The St. Louis Community Foundation serves as the liaison for the grant and will help to facilitate related reporting.

To schedule an appointment, please call 314.814.8700.



Grief support group for women expands mental health offerings

Affinia Healthcare is expanding its mental healthcare offering with a new women's grief support group.

The new group is designed to help patients process their grief resulting from the loss of loved ones, or other mental stressors. The grief support sessions meet the first Wednesday of each month for two hours at the Affinia Healthcare location at 4414 N. Florissant.

Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM) Rebekah Hassler, who leads the group, said her patients had similar experiences of grief and loss and felt beginning a support group would be helpful.

"I was seeing individual women for grief support, and I recognized there were others who had similar experiences," said Hassler. "One of the things I hear most often from the women in the group is that they don't feel so alone. The grief group normalizes grief which so often our culture does not."

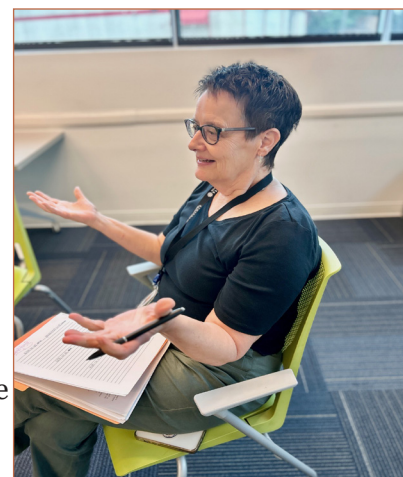
The women share about who they have lost -- from the loss of a child to gun violence to the loss of a spouse or partner.

Hassler, in addition to being a CNM, also has a master's certification in Spiritual Direction from the St. Thomas Aquinas School of Theology. She has experience working as a bereavement coordinator and hospital chaplain in Hospice, Labor & Delivery, and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. She completed a certification in the Advanced Evaluation & Management of Psychiatric Illness in Reproductive-Age Women from the American College of Nurse-Midwives and is completing a Perinatal Mental Health Certification from Postpartum Support International.

Providing a safe space for women to feel comfortable in sharing their grief, as well as to feel connected to others was part of the hope for Hassler. "One woman told me that she is learning so much about grief and that it is helping her in understanding her own process of grief. Another woman told me, 'I just didn't even know

how much I needed this'," Hassler explained.

According to the National Library of Medicine, 10 percent of bereaved individuals will develop a prolonged grief condition, while most individuals can navigate through a period of intense acute grief that lessens with time. Researchers also found that support groups may be a useful source of social support after a loss and can help prevent a prolonged grief condition.



Rebekah Hassler

While the N. Florissant group is in the early stages and continuing to evolve, Hassler emphasizes the group can share whatever they feel necessary. "I want to stress that people can share what they're comfortable sharing, if they don't want to share anything, they're not obligated," Hassler said.

In May, a separate grief group formed to specifically discuss perinatal loss from a miscarriage, fetal or infant loss.

"This type of loss is so hard, and it feels almost like an invisible grief," Hassler said. "I just want to provide a space where they don't feel so alone in their grief."

Affinia Healthcare also offers behavioral health services for adults and children. Parents can schedule a youth appointment with the Child Development Center directly by calling 314.814.8616.

Group grief sessions, including adult behavioral health care, are available for Affinia Healthcare patients only. Adult patients can receive services through a referral from their Affinia Healthcare provider. To schedule an appointment with a provider, call 314.814.8700.

AFFINIA
HEALTHCARE

*"I will not hide my grief,
as I did not hide my love."*

**Women's Grief
Support Group**

1st Wednesday
of the month
1 to 3 p.m.
Affinia Healthcare
4414 N. Florissant Ave
St. Louis, MO 63107

Sessions led
by
Rebekah Hassler
Certified Nurse Midwife

For more information
or to schedule:
314.814.8700
www.affiniahealthcare.org



For Your Information



ARE YOU COVERED?

If you have lost Medicaid health insurance coverage, know that you are not alone.



With our experienced Health Outreach Team by your side, re-enrolling in Medicaid health insurance is easier than you think.

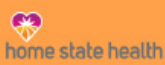
For more information or assistance, please call our Health Outreach Team at 314-814-8630 or 314-898-4281.

www.affiniahealthcare.org







Back TO School Bash

- ★ Physicals & immunizations
- ★ Medicaid application assistance
- ★ Free haircuts & face painting
- ★ Free school supplies (while supplies last)
- ★ Music, fun & more!

JOIN US AT THE FOLLOWING AFFINIA HEALTHCARE LOCATIONS:

10 A.M. TO 2 P.M.

SAT., JULY 26 @ 2220 LEMP AVE
SAT., AUG. 2 @ 3396 PERSHALL RD
SAT., AUG. 9 @ 1717 BIDDLE ST

To schedule an appointment, call 314-814-8700. This event is free and open to the public.

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Obstetrics & Gynecology

Our award-winning OB-GYN team of physicians, midwives, nurse practitioners, nurses, and doulas provide the best care for our patients.

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NOW OPEN



Affinia Healthcare Ferguson health center, located next to Emerson YMCA!

3396 Pershall Road, Ferguson

Affinia Healthcare is accepting new and current patients for medical, behavioral, and dental care at the new Ferguson location.



For more information about the new Affinia Healthcare location in Ferguson, please scan the QR code.

To make an appointment with Affinia Healthcare call 314.814.8700.

www.affiniahealthcare.org












AFFINIA

HEALTHCARE™

Inspired by the Patients We Serve

Our Locations

4414 North Florissant Avenue

3030 S. Grand

2220 Lemp Avenue

St. Louis Dental Center

3930 South Broadway Street

Affinia Healthcare Program Management Office

1717 Biddle Street

Flance Early Childhood Center

6763 Page Avenue

The Salvation Army Midtown Service
and Treatment Center

3396 Pershall Road

Connect with Affinia Healthcare on Social Media

Please like us on **Facebook**:

www.facebook.com/affiniahealthcare

www.facebook.com/Affinia-Healthcare-WIC-Program-566603083429888/

www.facebook.com/stldentalcenter

See our videos on **YouTube** (Affinia Healthcare)

Follow us on **Instagram**: www.instagram.com/affinia_healthcare/

www.instagram.com/affiniahealthcareWIC

www.instagram.com/affinia_midwifery

TikTok: www.tiktok.com/affiniahealthcare

Connect with the Affinia Healthcare Foundation on Social Media

Follow us on **Instagram**: https://www.instagram.com/affinia_healthcare_foundation/

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