



Nightingale

Affinia Healthcare Open House celebrates renovations, new management

If you haven't been to the Affinia Healthcare health center in the Souldard neighborhood recently, you're in for a treat.

Affinia Healthcare is holding an Open House Monday, September 8 to welcome patients and community members to the recently renovated health center. The new site has been reconfigured and touts new patient waiting and pharmacy areas, additional exam rooms, and building signage, as well as other improvements.

In addition to the new building features, the site has new leadership, veteran Affinia Healthcare nurse and clinical leader, Gwennita Watson. Watson is a registered nurse who has worked with Affinia Healthcare for 10 years, serving in a variety of roles. Recently selected to lead the Lemp

health center as its Clinic Director, Watson previously worked as the organization's Staff Health & Wellness Coordinator.



Affinia Healthcare staff at the Open House are (from left): Leslie O'Connor, Chief Financial Officer; Dr. Kendra Holmes, President & CEO; Gwennita Watson, Lemp Clinic Director; and Steven Harmon, Chief Human Resources Officer.

"We're so proud to reintroduce this health center to the South St. Louis community," said Dr. Kendra Holmes, Affinia Healthcare President & CEO. "We listened to our community and paid attention to what services were in high demand at this location. The Souldard neighborhood embodies the richness and diversity of St. Louis and we consider it an honor to serve the community. Under Ms. Watson's compassionate and knowledgeable leadership, the renovated health center is well positioned to meet the changing needs of families and neighbors."

The diverse service offerings at the Lemp Avenue site

See **Open House**, cont'd on page 4

Affinia Healthcare earns national quality recognition for health centers

Affinia Healthcare has received national recognition for its commitment to patient care.

The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) has recognized five Affinia Healthcare health centers with the Patient-Centered Medical Home Recognition. The health centers located at South Broadway, Biddle, North Florissant, Lemp and Page were recognized.

"This recognition reflects our commitment to delivering the highest quality, patient-centered care," said Dr. Kendra Holmes, President & CEO. "To earn this recognition, Affinia Healthcare demonstrated compliance

with all 40 core criteria and achieved well over the required 25 elective credits across these concept areas."

The NCQA Patient-Centered Medical Home program reflects the input of the American College of Physicians (ACP), American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and others. It was developed to assess whether clinician practices are functioning as medical homes and recognize them for these efforts.

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



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

Celebrating Excellence, Care & Compassion

CHW Champion Award: Candace Henderson, Director of Community Health, was selected for the Regional Community Health Worker Champion Award at the Heartland Conference on Health Equity and Patient-Centered Care. Henderson was selected from others in the region from Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas and Iowa.



Henderson

Esperanza Nominee: Yvonne Buhlinger, Vice President of Development and Community Relations was honored at the HOPE UNITES 2025 Premio Esperanza Celebration. Buhlinger was recognized for her dedication and service to the community. Her leadership continues to inspire hope and resilience among those in the community.



Buhlinger

Perinatal Mental Health Certification: Congratulations to Certified Nurse-Midwife **Rebekah**



Hassler

Hassler, for earning her Perinatal Mental Health Certification (PMH-C) through Postpartum Support International. The PMH-C program recognizes individuals able to help families experiencing perinatal mood and anxiety disorders in the perinatal period.

Doctor of Public Health: Alyssa Detrick, Development Coordinator completed the Doctor of Public Health Program at Walden University. Her research topic covered the association between malnutrition and gingivitis in the region.



Detrick



Lovelace

St. Louis Forum: Congratulations to **Takisha Lovelace,** Vice President, Chief Operating Officer, who was selected to the 2025 New Member Cohort of the St. Louis Forum. She joins a group of women leaders representing diverse industries as they grow in leadership.



McKinney

CAP CAB Appointment: Congratulations to Dr. Thomas McKinney, Pediatrician, who received and accepted an invitation to join the WashU Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Community Advisory Board. He was also featured in a NBC Nightly News story about vaccinations.



Congratulations to our group, A Conversation, for celebrating 2 years!! A group of men dedicated to gathering to have a candid discussion about physical and mental health and more.



New rain gardens project to improve environmental wellness

Affinia Healthcare will soon break ground on two amended soils areas, one pervious concrete area and four rain gardens at the health center located at 1717 Biddle Street.

The program will help manage rain where it falls by installing rainscaping site improvements that reduce local flooding and manage stormwater runoff, while also improving water quality in the Mississippi River.

St. Louis Project Clear Large Stormwater Grants Program, an initiative led by the Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD), is funding this project. The \$600,000 grant will pay for infrastructure improvements which will bring high performing systems to the site.

“This project is an opportunity to improve our property by offering access to beautiful natural spaces on-site and contribute to citywide efforts to be better stewards of our environment,” said Chris Overmann, Assistant Vice President of Operations and New Business Development. “The \$600,000 grant pays for infrastructure improvements that will bring these high performing systems to our parking lot.”

Rainscaping is the use of natural vegetation and systems to manage rainwater. The rainscaping improvements are amended soil areas, pervious concrete and rain gardens. Rain gardens are bowl-shaped gardens that capture and clean rainwater using native plants and special



Construction beginning in early August.



Pictures of the progression with the pervious concrete area (left) and the rain gardens holding swells (right).

soils. The amended soils areas are mixed with compost and planted with native vegetation. The pervious concrete area will provide a sustainable location for parking the mobile medical and dental units.

The project was developed by Greenprint Partners, a mission-driven delivery partner helping other organizations to achieve high-impact, community-driven stormwater solutions.

“Rainscaping reduces local flooding, manages stormwater runoff and helps reduce pollution that would otherwise flow into the Mississippi River,” said Greenprint Partners Associate Engineer Lucy Kopchak. “The amended soil areas and rain gardens help absorb rainwater, allowing it to drain directly into the soil.”

Construction is expected to be completed by October 2025.

NCQA *cont'd from page 1*

“NCQA Patient-Centered Medical Home Recognition raises the bar in defining high-quality care by emphasizing access, health information technology, and coordinated care focused on patients,” said NCQA President Margaret E. O’Kane. “Recognition shows that Affinia Healthcare has the tools, systems and resources to provide its patients with the right care, at the right time.”

Affinia Healthcare has health centers in North and South St. Louis, Pagedale, and Ferguson. To schedule

an appointment for medical or behavioral health care, please call 314.814.8700. To schedule a dental appointment, please call 314.833.2758.






NURSE of the Quarter

**IRIS
NORISE**
Prenatal Intake Case Manager

*Congratulations Iris Norise,
Affinia Healthcare Prenatal Intake Case Manager,
Nurse of the Quarter!*

Iris has been a nurse for 15 years with six of those years being at Affinia Healthcare. She received her LPN license from Applied Technology and plans to become a RN in the future. Iris loves helping others and she has always had a passion for nursing. "When you absolutely LOVE what you do, it's not just a JOB...it's my way of life and I'm loving every minute of it," she said.

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

www.affiniahealthcare.org

Open House *cont'd from page 1*

include: women's health, pediatrics, family medicine, radiology, pharmacy, dental care, behavioral health, and WIC services. Patients can also receive assistance with Medicaid applications.

In addition to these services, the Lemp Avenue health center is home to Affinia Healthcare's Convenience (formerly urgent) Care. The Convenience Care takes walk-in appointments for a variety of needs including asthma care, vaccinations and immunizations, physicals, STI testing and treatment, pregnancy testing, colds & flu, and more.

The Open House took place from 9 a.m. to noon on Monday, Sept. 8 at 2220 Lemp Avenue. The event was filled with giveaways, free health resources, refreshments, and other information for community members.

For more information, visit the Affinia Healthcare website, www.affiniahealthcare.org.



NURSE of the Quarter

**LENESHIA
BELL**
Clinic Nurse Manager

*Congratulations Leneshia Bell,
Affinia Healthcare Clinic Nurse Manager,
Nurse of the Quarter!*

Leneshia started her career with Affinia Healthcare in 2024 as a temporary employee and by the end of the year, she transitioned to the organization permanently. She earned her BSN from Grand Canyon University and is currently working on her MSN. Leneshia enjoys working at Affinia Healthcare because of the teamwork. "Everyone—from providers to support staff—works together with the shared goal of delivering high-quality, compassionate care," she said.

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

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Above: Lemp staff members outside.

Below (left to right): Ruther Lemon Liggins, Medical Assistant; Watson, and Tiearra Nobles, LPN Clinic Facilitator for Pediatrics.





Additional pain relief option now available

Affinia Healthcare is now offering an additional pain management option for common in-office gynecological procedures such as intrauterine device (IUD) insertions, endometrial biopsies and colposcopies.

Patients considering the IUD, a small T-shaped device used for birth control, now have the option of using a topical numbing spray prior to the procedure. Other methods of pain management offered are oral medications, or local anesthesia injections such as an intracervical or paracervical block.

“We emphasize shared decision making and discussion about expected pain from these procedures and the options to manage their pain,” said OB/GYN and Assistant Medical Director of Reproductive Health Dr. Jessica Norton. “We all feel pain differently and I think the goal is to talk about the pain ahead of time and all the different options for patients.”

According to a newly released Clinical Consensus Guideline from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), healthcare providers need a better understanding of pain management options for these common procedures to not underestimate the patients pain experience and to increase patient autonomy over pain control. ACOG recommends healthcare providers ask patients their preferences, listen to their answers, and offer and explain their pain management options.

The expansion of pain management options



Cetacaine, the new topical anesthetic spray option for patients to request for IUD insertions, endometrial biopsies and colposcopies.

at Affinia Healthcare has heightened significance for African American patients, as inequity and discrimination in women’s healthcare has historically and disproportionately impacted Black women.

“For generations, Black women in the United States have endured inequities in gynecologic care, often receiving less pain management, less informed consent, and less respect for their bodily autonomy,” said Affinia Healthcare President and CEO Dr. Kendra Holmes. “These inequities are rooted in a historical narrative that falsely claimed Black people have a higher tolerance for pain. This belief, born from slavery, has been perpetuated throughout modern medicine and results in generational trauma.”

This new topical numbing spray is now available at all Affinia Healthcare health centers and providers are to discuss this option with patients prior to the procedure.

“Women’s pain was just not being heard or valued. Since rolling this out, I’ve had a lot of patients say ‘yes, please’ and I’ve even had some patients to say ‘no, thank you,’” Dr. Norton added. “I think just making it patient-centered is the key.”

Affinia Healthcare offers comprehensive women’s health services which include midwifery, group prenatal care, and WIC services.

For more information about the Affinia Healthcare OB/GYN department, please visit www.affiniahealthcare.org/department/ob-gyn/. To schedule an appointment, please call 314.814.8700.



Dr. Jessica Norton speaks with FOX 2's Blair Ledet about the new topical numbing spray offered to patients.





Affinia Healthcare and A.T. Still University partner for Physician Assistant program to increase community health clinicians

Affinia Healthcare and long-time partner, A.T. Still University (ATSU) are collaborating to increase the number of clinicians and healthcare access for the community.

The Central Coast Physician Assistant (CCPA) Program was developed in partnership with the National Association of Community Health Centers as a post-baccalaureate option for graduates interested in pursuing a career as a Physician Assistant. Launched in 2021, CCPA is a two-year master's degree program, consisting of one year of didactic education at the A.T. Still University-College for Healthy Communities campus in Santa Maria, Calif. The second year is the clinical portion of the training which occurs at community health centers like Affinia Healthcare.

The clinical curriculum consists of 44 credit hours and exposes students to different disciplines and different environments. In the past, Affinia Healthcare has hosted up to four students who spent five six-week rotations in four different departments — family medicine, pediatrics, behavioral health, and obstetrics. Affinia Healthcare recently hosted four students in the clinical phase of the program.

"I've truly enjoyed my time with each department I've worked with so far. Through rotations in family and internal medicine, behavioral health, and pediatrics at Affinia [Healthcare], I've gained insight into many different aspects of patient care," said Truc Kha, a recent graduate of the program.

This real-life experience allows students to put into practice what they have learned in the classroom.

"We focus on students and teaching that is community-based, patient-centered and trauma-informed primary care," said Dr. Melissa Tepe, Affinia Healthcare Vice President & Chief Medical Officer. "Students practice with a collaborating physician to help train them to be strong, competent clinicians."

"I've seen how access, education and trust play important roles in health outcomes," said Roman Lopez, another CCPA graduate. "I've also learned that healthcare delivery requires constant communication, teamwork and adaptability. Every staff member -- from the front desk to providers -- contributes to the patient's experience."



The CCPA students recently graduated from the program. From left, Yoseline Escalante-Buendia, Kiera Long, Roman Lopez, and Truc Kha.

Affinia Healthcare employs physician assistants in its health centers to help ensure a primary care workforce for the future in communities that have a need for additional healthcare access.

"Ultimately, my goal is to serve the underserved communities, and work in a teaching establishment where I get the opportunity to be a preceptor to future clinicians," Lopez added.

Hometown Help

The ATSU Hometown Scholars Program helps CCPA applicants during the review process. Applicants enlist a community health leader to advocate on their behalf during the enrollment process. While it is not required for admission, applicants in the Hometown Scholars Program can receive an automatic interview should applicants meet the requirements. The hope is that this endorsement will encourage students to return home to practice.

"The Hometown Scholars Program supports local people who'd want to complete their clinical training at Affinia Healthcare and consider employment at Affinia after graduation. Having clinicians from the community can be very important in reaching the community being served," Tepe added.

For additional information about CCPA, visit www.atsu.edu/ccpa or call 866.626.2878. For more information about Affinia Healthcare and obtaining an endorsement for the program, please contact Dr. Melissa Tepe at 314.898.4282.



The Women's Safe House, Affinia Healthcare join forces to support domestic violence survivors

The Women's Safe House (TWSH) and Affinia Healthcare have entered a partnership to provide healthcare services to survivors of domestic violence through a new offering, The Health and DV Program.

Survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, human trafficking, sexual assault, and stalking seeking help from TWSH will now receive primary and preventative healthcare services through this partnership.

"Survivors who have broken free from a traumatic environment need a wide range of supports to help them recover and move to the next chapter of their lives," said Candace Henderson, Director, Community Health. "Often, they are starting over and support for their physical and mental well-being makes for a strong foundation. We are honored to provide these services at this critical point in their lives to help survivors rebuild and move forward."

The Health and DV Program is designed to support underserved members of the community who have experienced trauma due to domestic violence and related forms of abuse. Affinia Healthcare will accept referrals from TWSH for primary and secondary survivors (women and children) and deliver medical, dental, psychological and other services within 24-48 hours of the referral. Affinia Healthcare will also provide transportation for survivors (when available or necessary) and offer on-site health education.

TWSH also agrees to provide comprehensive support services – including safety planning and advocacy – to all individuals referred by or connected to Affinia Healthcare due to DV-related concerns.

TWSH also agrees to provide comprehensive support services to all individuals referred by or connected to Affinia Healthcare due to domestic abuse-related concerns. These services include — but are not limited to — crisis intervention hotline, safety planning, advocacy, emergency shelter, case management, counseling, legal aid, housing assistance, and 12 months of aftercare.

Also a part of the agreement is for staff from both organizations to participate in ongoing training focused on identifying and responding to domestic violence.

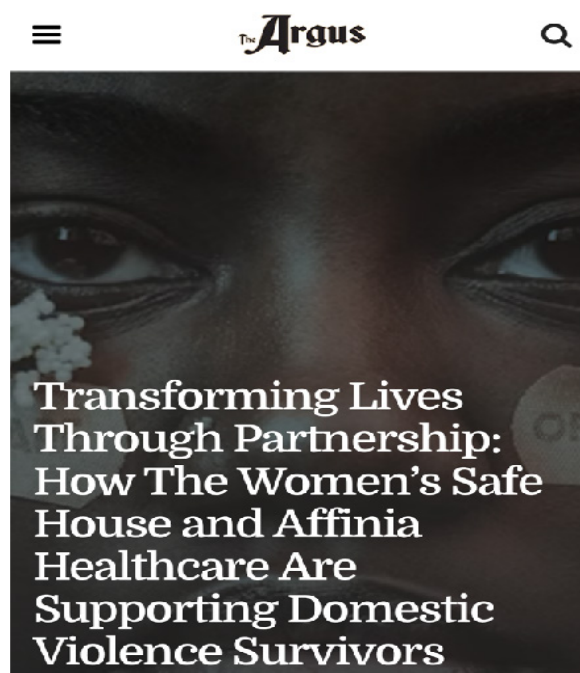
"While some effects of DV are immediately visible – like bruises or broken bones – others may not surface until later," said Aja Buie, TWSH Director of Residential Services. "Conditions like gastrointestinal issues, cardiovascular problems, and other chronic illnesses are often overlooked, yet may stem directly from abuse. Through this program, TWSH and Affinia aim to remove systemic barriers to care for those traditionally underserved by the healthcare system."

The partnership began in June 2025 and will run for a year, with an option to renew after June 2026.

If you or someone you know needs assistance with a domestic abuse situation, please call the TWSH hotline, 314-772-4535.



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"The Argus" featured the partnership between The Women's Safe House and Affinia Healthcare in a digital article.



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Wellness for You

Health and Wellness

Health is wealth! Affinia Healthcare is proud to collaborate with Southside Wellness Center and United Methodist for the Health and Wellness Event. This is an opportunity to join in to receive vital health resources, support and be with others in the community! There will also be healthy cooking demonstrations by the Affinia Healthcare WIC team.

- FREE bag of groceries (one per household)
- Receive a \$25 or \$50 gift card (while supplies last)
- COVID-19 vaccines
- Health screenings
- and more!

Saturday, October 18
10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Southside Wellness Center
3017 Park Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63104

For more information or to arrange transportation, please call
Southside Wellness Center Executive Director Ollie Stewart at 314-664-5024

To schedule an appointment
Call 314-814-8700

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Youth Support Group



Affinia Healthcare
4 to 6 p.m.
1717 Biddle Street
St. Louis, MO 63104

Affinia Healthcare and CHANGE are developing a cohort just for young adults. This is an opportunity for youth to speak openly and in a safe environment with a licensed therapist and with peers about mental health, violence prevention and other issues impacting the community.

- Sessions are twice a month on the following dates:
 - September 25
 - October 8 & 22
 - November 5 & 19
 - December 3 & 17
 - January 5 & 21
 - February 4 & 18
 - March 4 & 18
- Graduation for Cohort One is March 18
- Must be between the ages of 13 and 20
- Only accepting 30 participants
- A waitlist is available if cohort becomes full

For additional information or to sign up, please contact
Affinia Healthcare Outreach Director LaDon Meriweather, 314.814.8737 (direct), 314-797-0339 (mobile)
CHANGE President & CEO Asia Johnson at 314-933-0841



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

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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/

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Connect with the Affinia Healthcare Foundation on Social Media

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

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