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School Nurses and Staff Held Annual Education Day to Prepare for the New School Year and Celebrate a Milestone



From left to right: Ginny Keller, RN, MBA, NCSN, Director of the School Health Program, Health Care District of Palm Beach County; Karen A. Harris, Vice President and Administrator, Edward J. Healey Nursing and Rehabilitation Center and School Health Program; Robert M. Avossa, Ed.D., Superintendent, School District of Palm Beach County; Darcy J. Davis, Chief Executive Officer, Health Care District of Palm Beach County.

Jupiter, FL - More than 200 Health Care District of Palm Beach County^{TOP} School Nurses and School Health staff gathered Monday, August 7th,

2017 for an education day at the Jupiter Community Center to prepare for the new school year and celebrate a milestone: 20 years of keeping public school students healthy and ready to learn.

The Health Care District's School Health Program, which staffs registered nurses in health rooms at 167 public schools, has evolved into a model program as Palm Beach County is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the country to have such a high nurse-to-student ratio in the public schools. For many students, the School Nurse may be the only medical provider they see all year.

"The Health Care District's School Nurses provide a critical access point to care for our public school students, especially those from low-income families," said Darcy J. Davis, Chief Executive Officer of the Health Care District of Palm Beach County. "We're proud of our dedicated School Health staff and our long-standing partnership with the School District of Palm Beach County and the Florida Department of Health Palm Beach County."

At the event, Ms. Davis introduced Robert M. Avossa, Ed.D., Superintendent of the School District of Palm Beach County and recognized that under his leadership the graduation rate for District-operated schools has reached an all-time high of 88.3 percent. In his welcome remarks, Dr. Avossa thanked the School Nurses and staff for playing a key role in student success.

"You provide a caring environment and an amazing service to our children," Dr. Avossa said. "One of the things we're very proud of here in Palm Beach County is the fact that we have trained nurses in our schools. I've been in three other large metropolitan areas. The school

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districts just can't afford to do that. And in this community people have stepped up and said we're going to invest in health care, we're going to invest in our children, and I think our kids at the end of the day are the ones who really benefit from that investment."

Each year the School Health staff meets the week before the start of school to reconnect as a group before they begin working independently at their respective schools under strict protocols of care. Every school day, the nurses are ready to respond to a wide range of health issues, from injuries and illness to chronic diseases like seizures and asthma. They provide nursing care, medically-complex care planning and case management, and communicable disease surveillance. During the 2016-2017 school year, the nurses provided more than one million health care services to students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

"This annual education event helps prepare our nurses and staff for the coming school year as they care for more than 170,000 public school students," said Ginny Keller, RN, MBA, NCSN, Director of the School Health Program. "Some of the topics we covered include managing diabetes, behavioral health, and pediatric cardiology."

Along with school nurses, ten school health technicians carry out more than 98,000 student screenings each year for hearing and vision. The School Nurses identify conditions, some of which have been life-threatening, that might otherwise go unnoticed and they steer students and their families to resources and treatments. For more information, visit

www.hcdpbc.org/schoolhealth.

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Robert M. Avossa, Ed.D., Superintendent, School District of Palm Beach County thanks the Health Care District's School Nurses and School Health staff and congratulates them on the program's 20th anniversary.

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