

GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Jaeger finds great fit at Gateway SBHC

Huntington – Brenda Jaeger was a real find for the Gateway School-Based Health Center, although she might put it differently. She would say that the Gateway SBHC was a great find for her!

Brenda Jaeger is the new Nurse Practitioner at the Gateway School-Based Health Center, which provides routine and preventive health care, sports physicals, same day sick visits, emergency care, vaccines, behavioral health counseling and nutrition services to students and staff at school.

Jaeger has an extensive background as a nurse, nurse supervisor and nurse manager. She has been a Registered Nurse since the early 90's, later earning her MBA in Health Care Administration and a Doctorate in Nursing Practice/Nurse Practitioner more recently. She has held many administrative roles, but prefers the hands on care she provides at Gateway.

A resident of Russell, Jaeger describes herself as vested in the local community and even has a grandchild attending Littleville Elementary School. Her extensive clinical background includes working at an acute care hospital, long term care hospital and at a residential school (now closed) in Granby. After 22 years as a flight nurse in the Air Force Reserves, she recently retired as a Lt. Colonel. While in the military, she was deployed to Qatar, Macedonia and Washington DC where her role was the management, care and transport of our wounded warriors from originating facilities to more definitive care, other bases or home.

"I loved my role in the military and would have stayed longer, but I really wanted to focus on this new chapter in my life," Jaeger said. This section of her life's book started while working on her doctoral degree, when she interned at the Huntington Health Center where she found herself "impressed by the collaboration among practitioners and their commitment to people in the hilltowns." It made coming to the SBHC an easy decision for Jaeger.

"It's great. It's so refreshing yet challenging to be able to make an impact at a point where we are setting the stage for health and wellness for students as they grow," she said. "That's why having a clinic here is phenomenal."

A program of the Hilltown Community Health Centers, the Gateway SBHC can serve as a primary care provider. However, you do not have to be a patient of the Hilltown Community Health Centers to be seen at the SBHC and same-day sick visits are available. Currently, 58% of the students in Gateway Regional schools are enrolled in the School-Based Health Center, with 31% participating in "Gator Grins"—the portable dental program that provides comprehensive dental care to students at school.

Jaeger loves the model, which she describes as great for working parents, children missing less time from classes, and no delay in receiving needed care. She says she enjoys great collaboration with the school nurses and working with students on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. On Mondays and Wednesdays, SBHC hours are covered by Dr. Mary Chmura, which allows Jaeger to keep up her adult clinical skills at the Huntington Health Center.

It's a return, of sorts, for Jaeger—who actually attended Gateway Regional Middle School in 7th and 8th grade before her family moved to Westfield.

Anyone wishing to learn more about the Gateway School-Based Health Centers (and Gator Grins) is invited to call Kiirsten Cooper at 667-0142.

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Photo: Brenda Jaeger, new Nurse Practitioner at the Gateway School-Based Health Center.