

School District Opens Own Health Clinic for Employees

Posted By: Jessica Clark ■ 1 day ago

ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FL -- Randy Johnson admits it. Some people just don't like going to the doctor.

"I think men in general are squeamish about visiting a doctor," Johnson said. "But this was so easy, so painless."

Johnson was one of the first patients at the O'Connell Health Center that officially opened Monday on International Golf Parkway, near State Road 16.

Johnson is a former principal in at a St. Johns County school and is now the Director of Professional Development and Leadership for the school district.

The St. Johns County School District opened the clinic near World Golf Village for its employees, their dependents and the school district's retirees.

"The whole intent is to try to save money," said Jim Springfield, the Executive Director of Human Resources for St. Johns County Schools. "We're self-insured, so every penny we can save in the medical plan we can put into a classroom."

The district saves money by not having to pay for the overhead at doctor's offices.

For example, there's no receptionist at the clinic because patients make appointments on-line. Secondly, the district doesn't have to pay someone to do the billing for medical insurance because there is no billing.

Also, the district saves on prescriptions because it buys those medicines at wholesale prices and dispenses them at cost. Additionally, the doctors are paid a set salary.

Springfield explained, "The company we hired, called Care Here, hires the doctor on a salary. So there's no profit margin built in other than salary."

With the clinic, the St. Johns County School District expects to save \$4-5 million in three to four years.

However, the best thing for patients like Johnson may just be they don't have to pay anything for an appointment at the clinic.

Johnson chuckled, "That's pretty good!" After his appointment, he said, "Here I am just walking out of here. I don't have to write a check. I don't have to give up any money. I just made an appointment, got my assessment, going to make a follow up appointment and get my results. That's a win win!"

Johnson was at the clinic for preventative medical check-up.

In fact, Springfield said the clinic aims to do quite a bit of preventative care as a way of saving the district large medical bills in the future.

The St. Johns County School District plans to open at least two more clinics in other parts of the county.

Other county and city governments around the country and the state have started similar approaches to medical care for its employees.

This is reportedly the first time a Florida school district has tried it.

Springfield explained that if the clinic doesn't save the St. Johns County School District money, the district can always close the clinic.

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