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**AS WE SEE IT**

## School clinic a great opportunity

Healthier students are **better students**

**W**e urge area residents, businesses and the Community Foundation for Muskegon County to find a way to contribute to the development of teen health clinics at Muskegon and Muskegon Heights high schools.

While planning for the Heights clinic has been placed on "indefinite hold" as the district addresses other priorities, the Muskegon High clinic is expected to open this summer.

About \$60,000 is needed to transform a former shop classroom into the medical, dental and mental health clinic. The clinic will be inside Muskegon High School in the freshman wing, known as the J Building. It is expected to open in time for sports physicals in August.

Earlier, the Chronicle Editorial Board had proposed locating the clinic outside of the school, noting that teens may be reluctant to go to a clinic for help with pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases within sight of their principal, teachers and friends.

However, the opportunity to receive a federal Safe Schools - Healthy Students grant to help purchase furnishings and equipment is an important step to developing the clinic. Federal matching funds will bring in \$2.70 for every dollar donated to the center.

There's no doubt the Muskegon area needs a teen health clinic.

With a higher-than-state-average teen pregnancy rate and a near doubling among teens in the incidence of two sexually transmitted diseases in the last decade, it's clear area teens have some health issues.

Linda Juarez, Hackley Community Care Center executive director, which would operate the high school clinic, told The Chronicle

### YOU CAN HELP

Donations for the construction of the teen health center at Muskegon High School are tax deductible and are nearly tripled with federal matching funds. For information on how to donate, contact Linda Juarez, Hackley Community Care Center executive director, at 740-7442.

12 percent of the girls at Muskegon High school — about 80 students — either have children or are pregnant.

While the new clinic won't hand out contraceptives, its staff can discuss birth control options and help students access them at Hackley Community Care. Staff also can answer questions from the teen mothers about child care.

Juarez expects to serve 1,000 young people ages 10 to 21 at the clinic, which will be open year-round. Services will include immunizations, health screenings, sports physicals, dental care, nutrition information and mental health counseling.

Providing better health care to that many young people by making access to care easier can't help but make a huge difference in the school and the community. When students are healthy, their attendance is good and so is their attention in class. When they aren't worried by problems at home or in their social life their attention will be better in class.

Students also will get a closer look at job possibilities as they meet the physician assistant and registered nurse that will staff the operation.

Muskegon is lucky to have this opportunity.