

Real-world skills



WILLIAM JOHNSON / FOR THE INTELLIGENCER

Olivia Chwieroth, a Middle Bucks Institute of Technology student, uses a panoramic X-ray machine on patient Ryan Burns. The Warwick school held the grand opening of its dental clinic for low-income people without insurance on Thursday. **Story, A4**





PHOTOS BY WILLIAM JOHNSON / FOR THE INTELLIGENCER

Dental assistant student Olivia Chwieroth works a panoramic X-ray machine Thursday as Middle Bucks Institute of Technology held the grand opening of its dental clinic for low-income people without insurance.

Vo-tech school dental clinic fills void, gives students hands-on experience

By GARY WECKSELBLATT
STAFF WRITER

A new dental clinic at the Middle Bucks Institute of Technology gives students experience while helping low-income individuals without dental insurance.

"It's a very worthy program," said Lisa Cuffari, the school's dental occupations instructor. "Students get real-world skills in a real dental clinic. There's a great demand for dental assistants. And they get to see how it feels to help others in need."

The clinic for low-income individuals held its grand opening Thursday in the Warwick school, well known for its education in the building trades.

Patients can have cleanings and some restorative work, like fillings, taken care of. But items like dentures, crowns or bridges aren't part of the program.

Students chart the conditions, take X-rays, and interact with the patients.

"You can learn a lot from books but doing this helps a lot," said Alexis Thompson, an 18-year-old senior at William Tennent High School in Warminster. She hopes to become a dental hygienist and possibly an oral surgeon.

Fellow Tennent senior Megan Williams, 17, said "being chair-side as an assistant and interact with the public is the kind of experience that will help me as a job candidate when I walk into a dentist's office."

Cuffari got word out about the clinic by contacting area nonprofits and churches. The economically disadvantaged patients must be 18 and over without dental insurance. Six people were given examinations Thursday. Each paid the \$30 fee, which Cuffari said goes to the cost of supplies.

Michele Gladstone, a dental surgeon, was the volunteer professional at Thursday's clinic. Gladstone, who praised the equipment as "state of the art," has volunteered at the Benjamin Wellness Center in Kenya.

That experience, she said, "opened up my desire to give back more in this community."

MBIT also runs a restaurant (Aspirations) and cosmetology services (Salon Extreme). But the clinic plays a role the other services do not.

"This is different than the restaurant or salon," said Erin Rinker, MBIT's organizational advancement coordinator. "We're helping a population that wouldn't receive this benefit without us."

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Volunteer dentist Michele Gladstone works on a patient.

To help

The new Middle Bucks Dental Clinic is seeking dentists and hygienists to volunteer for a couple of

hours once or twice per year.

If interested, contact Lisa Cuffari, the school's Dental Occupations instructor, 215-343-2480.

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L. Makefield manager: Morrisville plant dumping improperly treated sewage in river

By CHRIS ENGLISH
STAFF WRITER

A plant in Morrisville where Lower Makefield sends 75 percent of its sewage for treatment is releasing improperly treated waste into the Delaware River, Lower Makefield Manager Terry Fedorchak said.

"They're not properly treating the sewage before it's entering into the Delaware River," Fedorchak told the Lower Makefield supervisors at Wednesday night's meeting.

That's not correct, said John Warena, executive director of the Morrisville Municipal Authority, which runs the plant, when reached on Thursday.

"We're in full compliance right now," he said of the claim that improperly treated sewage was entering the river.

Fedorchak said the plant run by the Morrisville Municipal Authority is facing a possible \$100,000 fine from the state Department of Environmental Protection and could be forced to take corrective action that would include a major renovation of the plant at an estimated cost of \$85 million, or construction of an entirely new plant at an estimated \$120 million.

Lower Makefield's 11,000 sewer customers would likely have to share

significantly in the cost of either option, perhaps as much as 43 percent, Fedorchak said. He added that no final decisions have been made about what to do about problems at the plant — which treats sewage from the Morrisville authority, the Yardley Sewer Authority and Lower Makefield — and he should know much more in three or four months.

"Taxes will not be affected," Fedorchak said of the possible financial impact on Lower Makefield residents. "However, sewer rates will be impacted."

Lower Makefield Supervisor Daniel McLaughlin asked Fedorchak on Wednesday night how the situation got so serious and whether the Morrisville authority was doing the proper periodic upgrades at the plant to make sure it was functioning properly.

"They haven't put into their plant perhaps what they should have," Fedorchak responded.

Warena said he disagreed with Fedorchak's assessment of the situation.

He said that for a couple of brief periods, sewage not up to treatment standards was entering the river, but even when it was, it didn't represent a health threat.

"We're not talking about dumping raw

sewage," he said.

Warena agreed the DEP has proposed a fine of more than \$100,000 but said that he and other authority officials are hoping to significantly reduce that during the process of talking about what immediate measures can be taken to improve sewage treatment at the plant.

Reached on Thursday, Virginia Cain, community relations coordinator for the DEP's Southeast regional office, said she couldn't say much about the matter at this point.

"It looks like this is an ongoing enforcement issue and therefore DEP can't provide any information about it at this time," she said.

Carolyn Brennan, operations administrator for the 900-customer Yardley Borough Sewer Authority, said she had concerns but wanted to reserve most comment until more decisions are made on what to do about the issue.

"Certainly this would impact Yardley Borough, absolutely, but everything is still preliminary and until we hear some more specifics, we don't want to raise any kind of alarms," she said.

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