

**Kraxberger wellness center combats teen stress, anxiety**

In the past few years, the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey shows that teens across the state have experienced a dramatic rise in stress, anxiety, and depression. To counteract this, Kraxberger Middle School has created a new Student Wellness Center, a place students can learn strategies to calm themselves and check in with a trusted adult.

“Students can’t focus on math or writing when their brains are in fight or flight mode,” said Principal Len Reed. “That’s why we created the Student Wellness Center — a safe place for kids to practice stress-reduction and check in with a trusted adult.”

“Students access the center by booking a 15-minute appointment in advance, teaching them to anticipate when stress will hit and take action to counteract it,” explains Vice Principal Jeff Waters. “This gives students a feeling of control and helps them build self-regulation skills to calm themselves.”

The Wellness Center was developed in partnership with Trillium Family Service and the Keep Oregon Well in School initiative. It has four different rooms so students can choose the strategy that works best for them. The Tactile Wellness Lab gives students a dimly lit room with a sand tray to create their own imaginative, nonverbal story line. The Quiet Wellness Lab next door is a dark space where students can control the levels of stimuli they are exposed to, with an option for complete darkness.

Another option is the Thinking Wellness Lab, a cozy library nook where students can study or meditate in a quiet space using noise-cancelling headphones. Other students prefer the Workout Wellness Lab, a space to burn excess energy and release aggression through structured, rhythmic movement. Choices include free weights, resistance bands, and a punching bag, each with instructions.

“I am already noticing the difference in students who have come through our wellness center to work on reducing stress or to deal with complications in their personal lives,” said center manager Lisa Lee. “I am amazed at the ownership the students are taking to advocate for themselves when they need the time to work on these skills.”

**PHOTO: Kraxberger Middle School’s new Student Wellness Center is decorated with calming, student-inspired murals painted by learning specialist Mara Asmus.**

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**Gladstone High School to host October 6 Binational health fair**

Gladstone High School will host a free Latino health fair during Binational Health Week. The event includes health and wellness information; flu shots; blood pressure checks; dental, hearing, and vision screenings; glucose testing; and health insurance enrollment.

The event will take place Saturday, October 6, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Gladstone High, 18800 Portland Avenue. Health screening vans will be located in front of the building. All information will be provided in English and in Spanish. Activities throughout the day will include performers, raffles, Zumba, and speakers from the Mexican Consulate and other community partners.

Binational Health Week is a joint effort between federal and state agencies, community organizations and volunteers to improve the health and well being of Latino families living in the United States and Canada.