

at the front lines



RAY STANYARD

Dr. Maggie Blackburn (center) at the school-based health program the College of Medicine operates at Munroe Elementary School in Quincy.

For Havana, a model of teamwork

With little fanfare or money but loads of enthusiasm, the Havana Health and Wellness Center is taking shape. The town may be tiny, but the project involves medical and educational partnerships on a grand scale.

“We’re looking for a way,” said Gail Bellamy, College of Medicine

rural health researcher, “in which all our universities and health-profession colleges can come together to address the specific needs and desires of this underserved community, and then model that to our students.”

Havana resident Shirley Aaron, head of the steering committee, said the plan is to open the center in August and have it serve the school alone for a year, then the whole community. Aaron notes that many of Havana’s low-income residents have no access to health care.

Organizers await word about several grant applications, but they remain undaunted. They’ve nurtured the relationships that undergird the center. Among their institutional partners are:

- Florida State University (Medicine, Nursing, and Communication & Information).
- Florida A&M University (Allied Health, Architecture, Pharmacy, Social Work, Public Health, and Provost).
- Tallahassee Community College (Allied Health Professions and Grants & Special Projects).

The College of Medicine already operates

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health centers in two Quincy schools.

"We really have an integrated team doing care there," said Maggie Blackburn, College of Medicine director of rural health. "That's not something that our students get to see a lot."

Added Yvonne Nelson-Langley, from FAMU's Community Health Alliance: "This is an opportunity for students to recognize that a medical student can learn something from a nursing student, or a student in social work, or a student in allied health, and that

when we bring it all together, it really benefits the patient."

The school system provided a 4,000-square-foot building. FAMU architecture students drew up blueprints for the space. The health department is providing personnel and supplies. At FSU, the College of Medicine is providing a halftime nurse-practitioner; the College of Nursing is providing two.

From the start, the organizers consulted local residents.

"This isn't about what we want for Havana," said Xan Nowakowski, with FL CURED at Florida State. "It's about what Havana wants and needs."

Aaron, retired from the FSU School of Library and Information Studies, is adamant that this project will not fail.

"I have never worked with a group," she said, "that is more dedicated and that has more passion and more expertise."