



June 9, 2022

Contact: Erik Thorson, Communications Director, 763-324-4612, or e-mail:
Erik.Thorson@co.anoka.mn.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Anoka County SHIP Helps School Implement Health-Based Programs

Being in a shopping mall and having a limited amount of space has not stood in the way of Paladin Career and Technical School having lasting impacts not only on their students' knowledge and skills but also their long-term health.

Located at the Northtown Mall in Blaine, Paladin is a charter high school that strives to cultivate resilience in its students by engaging their strengths through individualized learning. The school uses experiential, project, and work-based learning combined with an innovative, holistic approach to meet the needs of each student.

Katy Berglund, a school counselor at Paladin, said part of that holistic approach has been to help students stay healthy through a variety of approaches designed to create opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating.

"We recognize that for our students to truly thrive and prosper it's important for us to create opportunities that will strengthen their long-term health," Berglund said.

Those opportunities have often been a challenge due to the school's confined space and the fact that it does not have a gymnasium as most schools do.

With the support of the Anoka County Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP), Paladin has adapted to their current space by creating innovative physical activity programs.

Anoka County SHIP provided grant funding for Paladin to purchase softball equipment for playing softball at a nearby park as part of a physical activity curriculum. The softball games are a structured activity for students who receive PE credit for their participation.

-more-

Respectful, Innovative, Fiscally Responsible

Government Center ▲ 2100 3rd Avenue, Suite 700 ▲ Anoka, MN 55303-5024 ▲ www.anokacounty.us
Office: 763-324-4700 ▲ Fax: 763-324-5490

Affirmative Action / Equal Opportunity Employer

Anoka County SHIP Helps School Implement Health-Based Programs – Add 1

Through SHIP, Paladin was also able to purchase exercise equipment, which is housed in the cafeteria; students use the equipment during designated PE time, lunch, and during their free hours. This space allows students to complete their PE credit on-site.

The school also purchased a ping pong table, ping pong paddles, and ping pong balls. Students organize in-house competitions, and it has become a treasured Paladin item.

"The ping pong table has helped with relieving stress and with building relationships," Paladin student Devon Thompson said. "It's helped me get to know students and staff better."

In addition to increased opportunities for physical activity, over the past few years Paladin has implemented other projects directed at the physical health and well-being of both students and staff. Those efforts include adding an indoor garden system that grows greens and herbs year-round, a bike repair and bicycling education program, and a healthy hydration project to increase water consumption. Paladin also hosts family engagement wellness events focused on e-cigarette and vaping education for parents, healthy snack demonstration and sampling, mental health services, tobacco cessation, COVID vaccination and others. They have offered staff opportunities to participate in healthy cooking classes, have healthy snacks from a snack bar onsite, and practice yoga with one another to support their physical and mental well-being.

"SHIP funds have created a means to provide multiple options for students to participate in individual and group activities that they would not otherwise access," said Maria Hartwell, school social worker at Paladin. "These experiences have increased student resilience and strengthened our school community."

"Anoka County SHIP is proud to partner with Paladin Career and Technical School on these and other projects," said Jamie Kenealy, Anoka County SHIP educator. "That partnership is helping to create significant, and long-term benefits that will follow the students long after they have graduated."

SHIP is a state-based program that works at the local level to support healthier communities by expanding opportunities for active living, healthy eating, well-being, and commercial tobacco-free living.

Hartwell said that the current space restraints faced by Paladin will ease when they move to a new Coon Rapids location in Summer 2022. However, the school plans to continue its focus on the whole health of the students even after the move.

Anoka County SHIP Helps School Implement Health-Based Programs – Add 2



CUTLINE

Paladin students exercise with equipment purchased with the aid of SHIP.

DK:bv