



A primary health-care option returns to the Normandy area and north St. Louis County thanks to the new [SSM Health Medical Group](#) office in UMSL's Patient Care Center.

"North St. Louis County continues to be an important market for SSM Health Medical Group, and partnering with the University of Missouri-St. Louis offers us the opportunity to serve even more residents in this community, along with the students, faculty and staff of the university," said James Bleicher, MD, regional president for SSM Health Physicians' Organization and SSM Health Ambulatory Services.

A ribbon cutting and open house Thursday introduced the community to the medical office, which offers primary care, obstetrics and gynecology services. The space has about a dozen exam rooms and an X-ray room and is decorated in cheerful blue and teal tones accented by calming nature canvases.

"I already feel healthier," remarked a woman as she and others took in the décor and perused the space with all new medical equipment and furniture.

It's a stark contrast to the state of the former [Normandy Community Hospital](#), which used to stand on the exact ground where the UMSL Patient Care Center is now. The campus as well as the surrounding community has gone without a nearby health-care facility since the closure of the hospital in 2001.

"This new SSM Health location meets a great need locally," Normandy Mayor Patrick Green said. "For more than 15 years, area residents have had to leave their neighborhoods to seek professional medical advice and treatment. My hope is that increased access to convenient, reliable health care translates to a healthier, happier community."

UMSL Chancellor [Tom George](#) noted that the university has tirelessly fought to restore public health services to the area despite financial hurdles.

Through the creativity of [College of Optometry](#) Dean [Larry Davis](#), campus leadership and the [University of Missouri System](#), funding for a Patient Care Center came together. It required a

significant shift in the optometry college's budget and a student fee which the students voted for and approved.

The facility opened in November 2016 and immediately housed the [University Eye Center](#), which provides comprehensive eye and vision care for adults and children. But UMSL leadership always had a larger community health focus in mind for the center. About 13,000 square feet of the 48,000-square-foot building was set aside for community partnerships.

"We're excited to work side-by-side with SSM in delivering compassionate, quality care to campus and the community," Davis said. "It is my great hope that the Patient Care Center will continue to grow its services and address health needs of all kinds for our patients. I'm so happy to take that first step with SSM Health."

Family Medicine Physician [Valerie Walker](#) and OB/GYN Physicians [Hamanah Siddiqui](#) and [Kinsey Dinnel](#) have been taking patients at the office, which serves both the campus and general community, since Sept. 7. Appointments can be made online through [SSM Health's InQuicker website](#).

Key in bringing the university and SSM partnership to fruition was Rebecca Zoll, president and CEO of [North County Inc.](#), a regional development association.

"North County Inc. is about pairing people to help bring about the very best for the community," Zoll said.

Her involvement in [University Square](#), a community development corporation led by UMSL, North County Inc. and the [City of Normandy](#), connected SSM leaders with UMSL.

The SSM/UMSL collaboration is also considered a positive outcome for the [Great Streets Project](#), which continues to transform Natural Bridge Road into an economically thriving thoroughfare. Now it's a healthier one too.