



EDUCATION

Local student designs COVID wellness app

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Ephraim Zimmerman.

It started as a summer project. 17-year old Ephraim (“Effie”) Zimmerman, a rising senior at Roycemore School in Evanston, has been designing apps since junior high. He even founded his own company ... as a high school freshman.

But this summer, COVID-19 presented a new set of challenges. “I wanted to do something helpful in a different way,” Effie says.

What he came up with, originally for Roycemore, is the Student Wellness Screener, a phone-based app which helps clear students to enter school, track attendance and includes a contact tracing feature to let the user know if they came in contact with a COVID-exposed classmate.

Each morning, the student (or parent of a young student) answers a series of health questions on the app, such as do you have a sore throat, or a cough, or have you lost your sense of taste or smell? The user’s phone is scanned at school, and assuming the replies indicate good health, they’re allowed in.

Effie started marketing the app using Roycemore’s connections with other small, private schools. “My goal was if I got one additional school to sign on I’d call it a complete success,” Effie says. So far, he’s gotten 25.

“Anyone who meets Effie is immediately struck by his self confidence,” says Adrienne Finley Odell, Head of School at Roycemore. Besides his engineering and business skills, Effie is also an accomplished pianist and is president of the Upper School student body at Roycemore.

The app is designed for schools of up to 750 students. (Roycemore has slightly over 200). The cost is \$550 for every 500 students, so most schools could get the system for the \$550 minimum. Effie says “I wanted to be the least expensive but the best.”

Effie has already designed an app for Northwestern University. His company has three employees. Odell says “I really admire his attitude for learning and growing.”

As skilled as he is, Effie admits he’ll have some opening day jitters when classes begin at Roycemore next Wednesday, “nervous,” he says, that his system “doesn’t crash.”

Based on his track record, it won’t. And if Effie gets to check how his app is doing at other schools, he might want to check out the most distant user, say, in February.

It’s in Hawaii.