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A Vision for a Healthier Sullivan County

BY JOHN LIDDLE,
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

Sullivan County is lucky to have a committed team of nurses, caseworkers, and support staff serving our community at the Division of Health and Family Services (DHFS) in Liberty. Despite suf-

among counties across the state, Sullivan County is still above only the Bronx in the quality of our community's health, according to annual county health rankings recently updated by the Robert Wood Johnson

healthy behaviors in ourselves and our children, and we must end the opioid crisis that continues to so profoundly affect our community.

Ninety-four percent of Sullivan County's citizens have health insurance, yet many of us do not or cannot regularly access the life-giving services we need to live stronger, healthier lives. This is partially because we live in a rural county and have one primary care provider (MD or Nurse Practitioner) for every 2,900 people in the county – more than double state and national averages.

Bringing more providers to Sullivan County is important, but we must also make full use of what we do have. Government agencies, community groups, and providers need to work together to build awareness of available systems of care and help our families, friends, and neighbors find the care needed to have a decent quality of life.

Sullivan180's Community Resource Guide and Sullivan County's soon-to-be released Intervention



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

John Liddle

and Prevention dashboard (a spinoff of our popular COVID-19 community dashboard) will go a long way in helping folks find the services they need to improve their health.

While nurses and doctors play a central role in protecting and restoring good health, it is actually social and economic conditions that most heavily influence our community health ranking. The stress on individuals and families associated with income inequality, child poverty, and lack of post-secondary education has been scientifically connected to unhealthy behaviors and poor health outcomes such as premature death from suicide, substance use disorders, and cardiovascular disease.

We must therefore seize on the opportunities in front of us to help tenants and small landlords get out



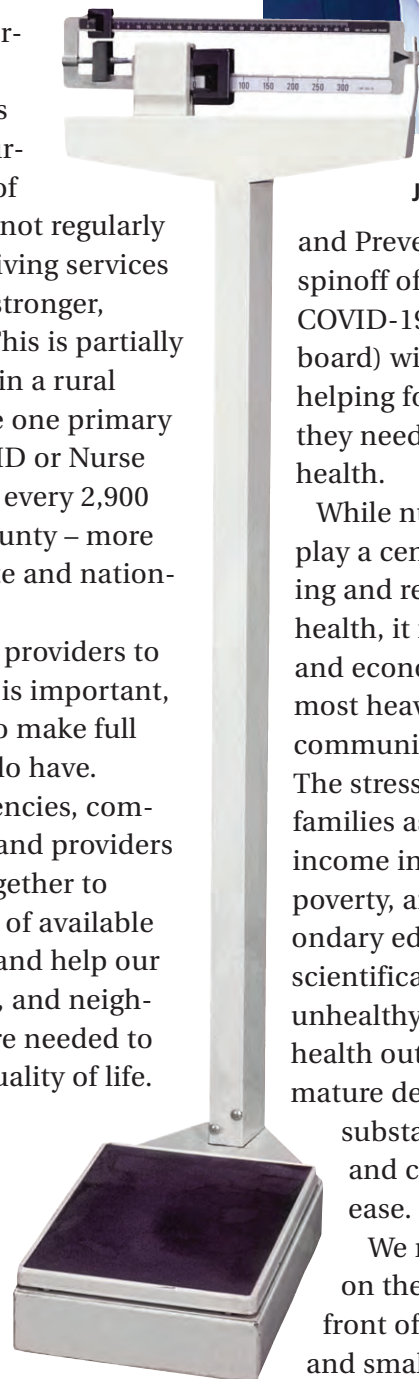
METRO CREATIVE SERVICES PHOTOS

fering through the many challenges of COVID-19, DHFS actually IMPROVED its delivery of services during the pandemic by cutting our county's number of foster children in institutional care in half, reducing our homeless population to historic lows, opening mental health telemedicine clinics, and putting more than 10,000 vaccines into arms in less than four months.

We should all be proud of our DHFS team, but we must also confront the brutal fact that

Foundation (countyhealthrankings.org).

It doesn't have to stay that way, but changing our position in State rankings will require everyone's commitment. It also demands collaboration on a variety of issues. Government agencies, non-profits, and private companies must find ways to ease access to all types of medical care and enhance our communities with responsible economic and workforce development. We must all encourage





METRO CREATIVE SERVICES PHOTO

of debt, increase access to child-care, and develop our workforce with skills needed to fill higher-paying jobs. And in order to ensure the positive changes we create are sustained over the long term, we must all commit to preparing our children for adulthood with a quality education, not just in math and reading, but in financial literacy, nutrition, and other important life skills.

The Division of Health and Family Services will work with many partners to bring these concepts to life, but you have the ability to improve our health rankings too! As life returns to “normal,” take advantage of opportunities to get back in the gym or keep your social distance by getting out on one of our county’s beautiful trails.

If you’re like me, late night snacks have been gobbled up a little too easily during the pandemic, so try to be more thoughtful about what you eat. Finally, if you’ve been afraid to go to the doctor’s office during COVID, think about getting those

regular checkups and screenings back on track. Small efforts from everyone in the community will make a big positive difference in our health over the long term!

We can and will do better. It may take several years to climb out of the bottom of the State health rankings, but our commitment to the task is stronger than ever, especially as we see the light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel becoming



METRO CREATIVE SERVICES PHOTO

There are many factors that influence the overall health of an area, going well beyond dietary choices, although we must be thoughtful of what we eat. Other issues can be financial, such as income inequality and child poverty which are scientifically connected to unhealthy behaviors and poor health outcomes.

ever brighter.

It will take focus and commitment, but better days are ahead for the health of Sullivan County. We look forward to the jour-

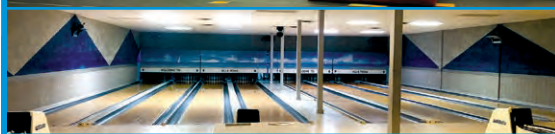
ney ahead and having you along with us!

John Liddle is the Sullivan County Commissioner of Health and Family Services.



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'Am I sick or is this my allergies'

A discussion on allergies vs viral illness



BY AMY DIMASE, PA-C
CRYSTAL RUN HEALTHCARE

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As allergy season is now upon us, the Allergy & Immunology Specialists at Crystal Run Healthcare want to give you the tools you need to manage your allergies and help determine when symptoms are allergy or illness-related.

Life this past year, living through a global

pandemic, has been very challenging for everyone. For the millions of people who suffer from allergies, the challenges have been even greater. With heads turning at every cough, sneeze and snuffle, allergy sufferers often find themselves in a dilemma trying to determine if they are sick or if it's just their seasonal allergies.

Similar Symptoms Can Cause Confusion

Symptoms experienced with seasonal allergies and viral illnesses are similar, but there are important differences that can help determine the cause of what you're experiencing. The severity of symptoms with both conditions can vary from person to person and range from mild to severe.

Allergies are caused by an immune response that is triggered by many different irritants. Common allergy triggers include dust, mold, pollen, and animal dander.

Exposure to the allergen causes a sudden onset of symptoms. Symptoms include nasal congestion, runny nose, sneezing, and itchy, watery eyes typically respond well to allergy medications like antihistamines and nasal steroid sprays. For those who don't find success with traditional allergy medications, there's the option for allergy shots (immunotherapy). While the onset happens quickly, allergy symptoms can last for weeks and even months at a time. It's important to note that allergies are not contagious and most people have a seasonal pattern of symptoms in past years.

Upper respiratory illnesses, however, like the common cold, flu and COVID-19, are caused by viruses and are contagious. Exposure to infectious respiratory droplets can typically cause symptoms to develop in 2-14 days.

Symptoms of a viral illness can include nasal congestion, sneezing, runny nose,



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cough, headache, fatigue and muscle aches.

COVID-19 has a unique set of symptoms that can also include shortness of breath, loss of taste and smell, and high fever. A viral illness usually lasts 7-10 days and is treated symptomatically with over-the-counter cold medications, rest and hydration.

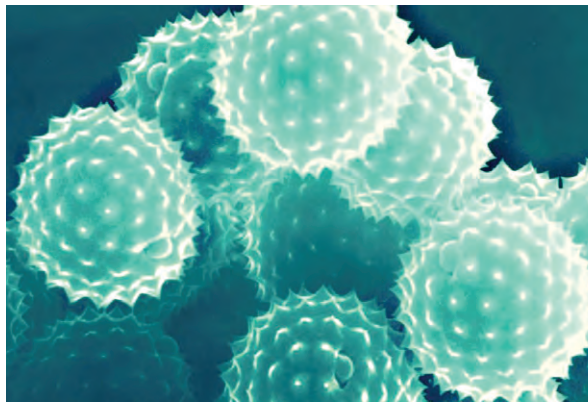
In severe cases, patients may need to seek medical attention. Based on the contagious nature of COVID-19, it's important to speak with your doctor to determine if testing is right for you, especially if you don't have a history of allergies, but are experiencing even mild allergy-like symptoms.

Crystal Run Healthcare offers PCR (nasal swab) testing for COVID-19 by appointment at several convenient locations in Sullivan, Orange and Rockland counties. If you need to get tested for any reason, please call our COVID-19 hotline at 845-643-3909.

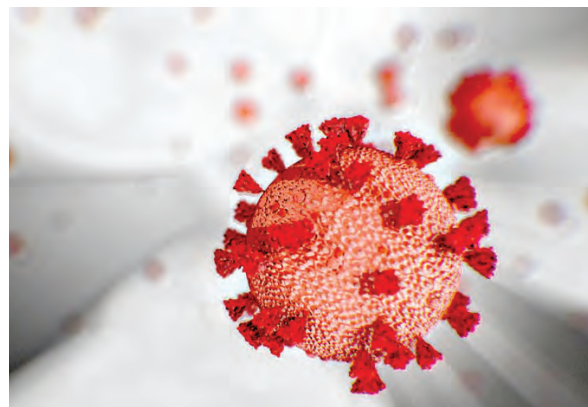
Speak with an Allergy & Immunology Specialist

If you frequently experience symptoms of seasonal allergies or if your symptoms are not improving with over-the-counter allergy medications, you should make an appointment to consult with an experienced allergist at Crystal Run Healthcare.

An allergist will perform skin testing for



With some basic similarities in shape the ragweed pollen (above) and the coronavirus cell (below) do sometimes mimic each other's symptoms.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

environmental allergens to help you identify your allergy triggers. Once you are aware of what is causing your seasonal allergies you can be better prepared to treat your symptoms. If you have asthma, allergies and viral illnesses can cause a flare up. Identifying and avoiding your allergens can help you to have better control of your asthma symptoms as well.

At times, it can be hard to determine if your symptoms are related to allergies or illness, which is why it's best to consult with a doctor.

An allergy diagnosis will help you avoid known allergy triggers and be more confident when trying to answer the question of "Am I sick or is this my allergies?"

To schedule a general appointment at Crystal Run Healthcare, visit CrystalRunHealthcare.com/Appointment or call 845-703-6999.

To schedule a COVID-19 test, call the COVID Hotline at 845-643-3909.

Amy DiMase PA-C, is an Allergy & Immunology Physician Assistant at Crystal Run Healthcare. She completed her Master of Science degree in Physician Assistant Studies at King's College in Wilkes-Barre, PA. She is a Board Certified Physician Assistant and her clinical interests include allergy testing and food allergies. Amy is seeing patients in Middletown and through Telehealth virtual appointments.

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NAMI Ribbon Campaign: May is Mental Health Month

BY M. LORI SCHNEIDER

Last year this time, in the early throes of COVID-19 with people sheltering in place, the NAMI Ribbon campaign was mainly Virtual, with little more than NAMI members framing their Facebook profile pics in a Ribbon Motif and not much out in the public eye. Although we are still dealing with the pandemic, much has changed in the year's time and hopefully, you've been seeing ribbons around Sullivan County this month.

You may be wondering, "what's up with the ribbons?" May is Mental Health Month and nationwide, affiliates of NAMI

(the National Alliance on Mental Illness) are once again spearheading a "Ribbon Campaign" to raise awareness about serious mental illness and the presence of the NAMI chapters locally. NAMI of Sullivan County, NY has been providing services in Sullivan County since 1983.

Mental illnesses are neurobiological brain disorders – as real as any other physical illness. The goal of the NAMI Ribbon Campaign is to raise awareness, encourage open dialogue, end the stigma of mental illness and promote the free services the nonprofit provides. The campaign will last through the month of May.

White ribbons bearing the

organization's logo are being displayed prominently on trees or poles throughout Sullivan County at area businesses, schools, and other agencies.

Mental illness affects one out of four adults and one out of 10 children every year, while one out of 17 people lives with a serious or chronic condition like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Mental illness is absolutely a community issue and we are looking to engage the community with these eye-catching ribbons.

der. Half of the adults with a diagnosable mental illness will also have a substance abuse disorder at some point. One in four families has a loved one who has been diagnosed with a mental illness.

Mental illness is absolutely a community issue and we are looking to engage the community with these eye-catching ribbons.

Mental illnesses like Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, Depression, Anxiety, PTSD, OCD, Schizoaffective Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder are as real as other physical illnesses.

The brain is an organ of the body susceptible to illness the same as the heart, lungs, pan-



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Pictured from left are NAMI Board Members, Marie Buckstad, Eileen and Ron Geysen adorning the County with Mental Health Awareness Ribbons.

creas. These are no-fault, equal opportunity brain disorders that strike across all age groups, socio-economic backgrounds and backgrounds. They affect the way people think, feel and relate to others. There should be no shame associated with having a diagnosis of a psychiatric illness – any more so than heart disease, diabetes, or any other physical illness. The shame is in not having open dialogue; not talking about these illnesses keep them shrouded in stigma, myths and misunderstanding.

Primarily a family support and advocacy organization, NAMI offers an array of free, confidential support groups, currently meeting Virtually, via ZOOM and/or telephone. Sharing and Caring Family Support groups meet on the third and fourth Tuesday of each month from

6:30 – 8 p.m.

The NAMI Connection group is a peer-led Peer Support group for adults living with mental illness. It meets the first and third Monday of each month from 7 – 8 p.m.

The Suicide Bereavement Group is open to people who've lost a loved one to Suicide, and meets on the first Wednesday of each month from 6:30 – 8 p.m.

If you or someone you love has been diagnosed with a mental illness, you are not alone! NAMI Sullivan County, NY can help. For more information about support groups or to find out more about the advocacy, education or referral to clinical services, phone (845) 794-1029.

M. Lori Schneider is the Executive Director of NAMI of Sullivan County, which is located at 20 Crystal Street in Monticello.

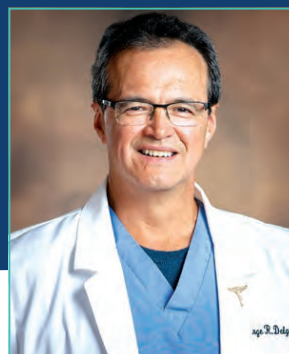
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Staying safe while getting s

BY DR. JOSEPH
CHAVEZ CAREY
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Are you ready to get outside and enjoy all the recreational opportunities that summer offers? By taking some basic precautions, you can do so safely and still have fun.

First, fight back against that blazing sun by regularly using good, strong sunscreen. The sun's heat may feel good, but sunscreen will reduce risks of sunburn and skin cancer, America's most common cancer. It is true that being in the sun helps your body produce Vitamin D, but don't sacrifice use of sunscreen to try to fulfill this requirement.

Tick-borne diseases are particularly common during warmer months. Lyme disease is caused by a bacteria transmitted through a tick bite. Symptoms, which

can appear over several weeks include fever, a skin rash, headache, fatigue and even joint pain. Be especially alert for these conditions after seeing a tick on your body. If you are bitten by a tick and it appears that it's not too deep, use a tweezer to remove it. Do so by grabbing the tick as close to your skin as possible, near the tick's head. Avoid squeezing the tick's body. That can push infectious material into your skin. If the tick is too far embedded for you to remove, visit your doctor or an urgent-care facility to have it removed. Your treating provider will also perform a test for Lyme disease and provide treatment, such as antibiotics, as needed.

Up for a hike or a simple walk in the woods? Be sure to wear the proper gear

and attire, including sturdy, comfortable boots. The New York State Department of Conservation recommends planning your route in advance and alerting family and friends about your plans. The Department also suggests carrying a first-aid kit, food and water, and honestly evaluating your abilities when choosing the duration and location of your hike.

Biking is another great way to maintain and achieve fitness. When you hop on your bike, wear a bike helmet. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that about 800 bicyclists die each year due to bicycle/vehicle crashes, and hundreds of thousands of additional bicyclists end up requiring emergency care. Wearing a helmet can cut the risk of head injury by as much as 85 percent, ac-

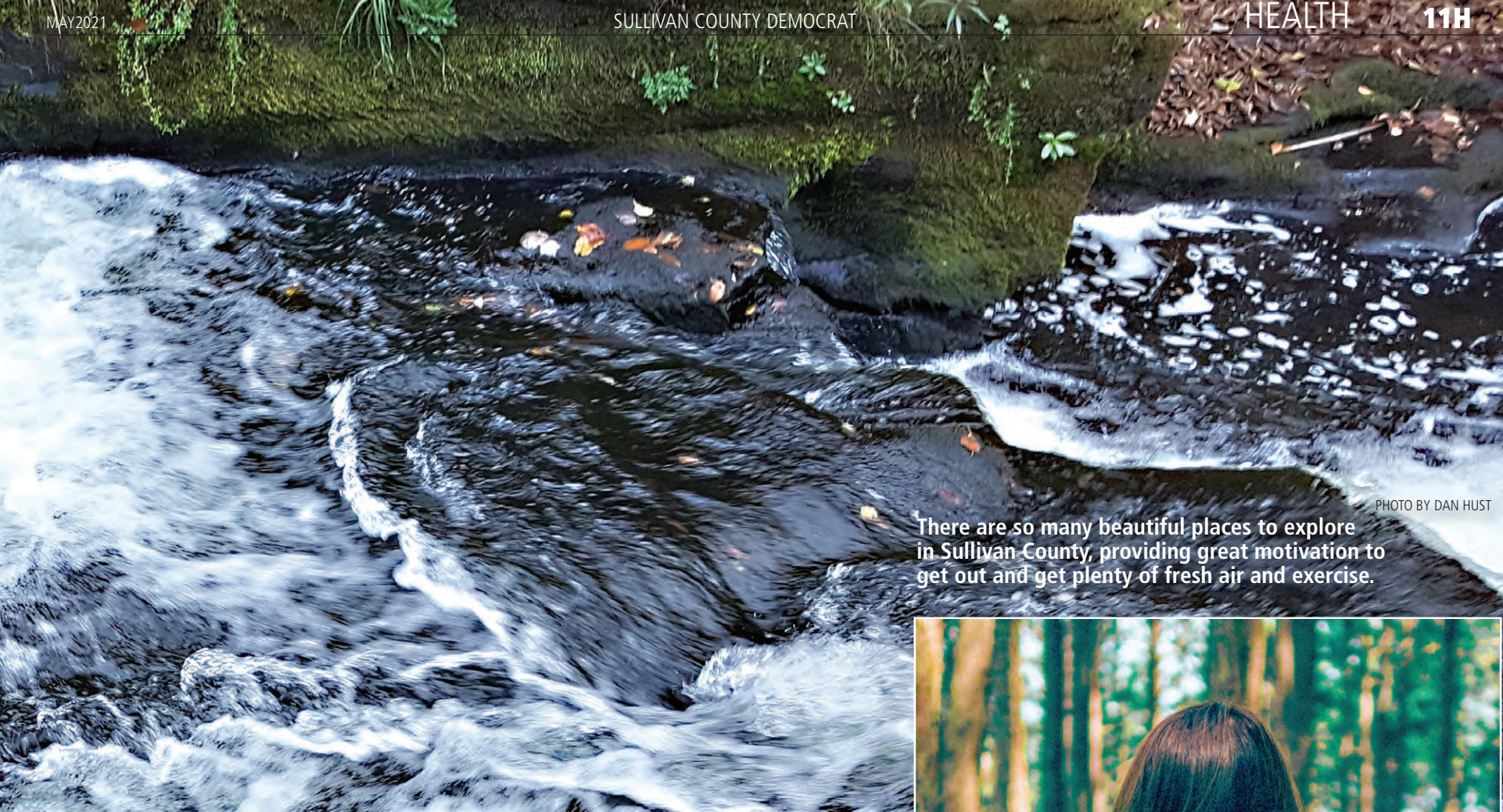


PHOTO BY DAN HUST

There are so many beautiful places to explore in Sullivan County, providing great motivation to get out and get plenty of fresh air and exercise.

summer healthy

cording to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. In addition, it is crucial that your helmet fits properly so it protects your head and brain. And don't let the kids ride without a helmet, either. Their brains are still developing, and they're more apt to fall and be injured.

And this year, there's another essential step for staying safe this summer: Be sure to get a COVID-19 vaccination. The virus is still a threat, but vaccines are more widely available than ever before. If you haven't been vaccinated, please remain cautious. Continue to practice social distancing, wear a mask and wash your hands frequently. That's also good advice even if you have received the vaccine.

The Garnet Health Doctors team is here if you need a COVID vaccination, or care

for any illness or injury. To learn more about vaccinations, visit garnethealth.org/coronavirus. For doctor's appointments, telehealth visits via a phone call or live video are easy and convenient. This means you don't have to leave your home – and that you can receive care from anywhere. Most insurance plans cover Telehealth.

While Telehealth is convenient, sometimes it's best for a patient to come to the doctor's office. Garnet Health Doctors has created clean and sanitary environments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Precautions include extensive and frequent cleaning regimens at our locations; convenient Urgent Care curbside check-in to



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CONTINUED ON 12H



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Joseph Chavez Carey, MD, FAAFP

FROM PAGE 11H

reduce the amount of people in our waiting areas; and allowing one person at a time to enter.

For more convenient access to Garnet Health Doctors, be sure to download the new Garnet Health app. It's free and available via the App store on Apple devices and Google Play for Androids. Features include access to MyChart health-information resources, including Visit Notes that summarize information provided by your physician; how to find a doctor, location or service; driving directions to our locations; the ability to schedule an appointment with Garnet Health Doctors; online bill pay; news and information; MyChart notifications and more.

To set up a Garnet Health Doctors' telehealth or in-person appointment, call (845) 333-7575. To learn more, visit garnethealth.org/doctors or call our Bethel office at (845) 583-5620, the Callicoon office at (845) 887-5693, the Harris office at (845) 794-5335, the Liberty office at (845) 333-6900, our Livingston Manor office at (845) 333-6555, the Middletown office at (845) 333-7575, the Monroe office at (845) 333-7830 or the Monticello office at (845) 333-6500. Our newest office, at 102 Clowes Avenue in Goshen, is now open. It's conveniently located in the Goshen Plaza off exit 124 of Route 17. The phone number is (845) 333-7200.

About Joseph Chavez Carey, MD, FAAFP
Primary Care Medical Director Dr. Joseph

Chavez Carey is Board-certified in Family Medicine. He received his medical degree from New York University School of Medicine and completed his internship and residency at Contra Costa Regional Medical Center in California. Dr. Chavez Carey sees patients of all ages – including kids – and is fluent in Spanish. He is a Castle Connolly Top Doctor and was ranked as the 2018 Favorite Doc by Hudson Valley Parent.

About Garnet Health Doctors

Garnet Health Doctors is part of Garnet Health, comprised of the well-established and highly regarded Garnet Health Medical Center and Garnet Health Medical Center - Catskills. Garnet Health Doctors is a growing Urgent Care, Primary Care and multi-specialty, Hospital-supported medical practice. With Board-certified Physicians, Board-certified Family Nurse Practitioners and Board-certified Advanced Practice Professionals, we provide outpatient care to patients in Orange, Sullivan, Ulster, Pike and Sussex Counties. Appointments are available at offices in Bethel, Callicoon, Goshen, Harris, Liberty, Livingston Manor, Middletown, Monroe and Monticello. Visit garnethealth.org/doctors.



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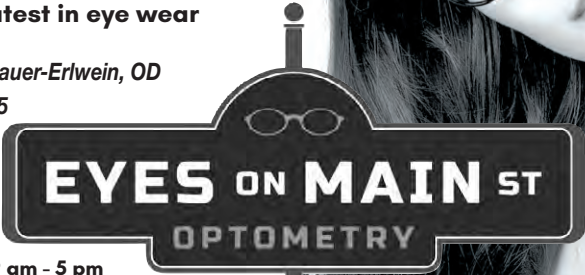
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Read Dennis' story @ wmh.org

Watch out!

It's tick time

BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

Despite seemingly taking so long to arrive, Spring is finally here. Flowers are blooming, and allergies are raging.

And after a long winter, many are ready to hit the great outdoors by either visiting one of many great parks and famous hiking trails in Sullivan County or just in their own backyard. Either way, you need to play it safe.

This not only means wearing your mask if you are outdoors and cannot practice social distancing, but you also need to worry about ticks.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), ticks are around all year, but they are most productive between April and September.

Before you head out to the great outdoors and start your new adventure, there are a few things you can do to protect yourself from ticks that can cause Lyme disease and pass on other infections.

Lyme Disease

According to Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County (CCESC), Lyme Disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted to humans by the bite of infected black-legged ticks.

Some of the symptoms can include fever, headache, fatigue, and skin rash.

The disease, if left untreated, can spread to the heart, joints, and nervous system.

CCESC says most cases can be treated with a few weeks of antibiotics; however, according to the CDC, left untreated, Lyme disease can cause severe headaches and neck stiffness, memory loss, and other long-term effects.

Protect yourself!

Before you go out on your adventure, think ahead and know where you are going and that there might be a high chance of ticks latching onto you.

Ticks like to inhabit grassy, brushy, or wooded areas, or even on animals. Deer and rodents can



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

The above image shows the tick in stages from the tiny nymph to an adult female. The image at right is of an engorged tick. People whose animals run around outside will often have their pets come home with the engorged tick latched onto their skin. They can (and should) be pulled off and discarded somewhere safe.

also carry them.

So if you are outdoors either walking the dog, camping, checking your tomatoes in the garden, you can come in close contact with ticks.

According to the CDC, most people get ticks in their backyard and even their front yard. Ticks have no boundaries, so it is best to prepare yourself with these tips.

Tips

You can treat your clothing and camping gear beforehand with



Permethrin, a pesticide that repels mosquitoes and ticks.

Remember to wash your hands when applying the chemical and clean after direct contact with the skin. Keep away from pets and children.

You can also use the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents containing DEET.

If you are on the trails, you can

avoid ticks on your journey by avoiding wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter. It is recommended you walk in the center of trails.

Check yourself!

Once you come back from your grand adventure, whether it was conquering a mountain's trails or simply mowing the grass, you need to check yourself.

You should not enter the house with clothes that are in heavily wooded or grassy areas. Or if you have participated in heavy outdoor activities like hiking, long walks in the woods, or doing yard work like trimming the grass or working the garden.

Once you contain the clothes, you can either throw them into the washing machine and wash with hot water then tumble hot in the dryer soon after.

If you don't want to wash your clothes, you can toss the clothes in the dryer and give them a spin on the highest setting to make sure those ticks are gone.

It is also a good idea to take a shower to help remove any ticks.

The CDC says you should check under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, back of the knees, in and around the hair, between the legs, and even around the waist. These are considered tick hot spots.

If found, you will need to remove them using tweezers and pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouth-parts to break off and remain in the skin according to the CDC.

The CDC said if this happens, remove the mouth-parts with tweezers. If you are unable to remove the mouth easily with clean tweezers, leave it alone and let the skin heal.

So whatever you do in the great outdoors, stay safe from ticks by following some tips, using good tick repellent, and being thoughtful about what you are doing and how long an encounter with a tick can affect you and your family. So stay safe!

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Fallsburg Junior Senior High School hosts Mental Health Awareness Assembly

On Wednesday April 28, the Fallsburg Junior Senior High School (FJSHS) hosted a virtual Mental Health Awareness Assembly for all students. Access: Supports for Living (ASL) supported the program. ASL's CEO Ron Colavito states: "Normalizing conversations about the struggles many kids are having with stress and anxiety and the impact of substance use on their lives and community is a critical first step to supporting children and their families to seek the support they need to live full, healthy lives."

FCSD Assistant Superintendent Dr. Sally Sharkey, Principal Kyle Roddey, Assistant Principal Shana Bruestle and Social Worker Michelle Sager reinforced ASL's message. They reminded students that "it is okay to not be okay," and that it was important to reach out when they need additional emotional support.

Honored guest speakers were Tony Richardson and Syndee Winters. He is a

retired NFL Hall of Famer from the New York Jets and Kansas City Chiefs. Ms. Winters, a recording artist and Broadway star, acted in "Hamilton" and "The Lion King." They passionately shared with the students the challenges they faced and overcame as adolescents. They emphasized the importance of seeking mental health support when needed.

Additionally, they encouraged supporting loved ones in need of additional support.

Superintendent Dr. Ivan Katz and the administrative team are committed to bring supportive mental health programs to the district for students, staff and families. "Having true champions in life to meet with our kids to show them that great things can happen through another's efforts are the kinds of things we want to share. This lets them know that they too can become great champions and do great things in life."

The participating administrators echoed Dr. Katz. Assistant



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Top row, left to right, are FJSHS Principal Kyle Roddey, Social Worker Michelle Sager, NFL Hall of Famer Tony Richardson, and Assistant Principal Shana Bruestle; bottom row left to right are Assistant Superintendent of FCSD Dr. Sally Sharkey and recording singer and Broadway actress Syndee Winters.

Superintendent Dr. Sharkey said, "This was a powerful program that covered a critical topic for our students. We are grateful for Ms. Winters and Mr. Robinson for joining us to share their stories with our students." Principal Roddey stated, "What an amazing morning! Our students were spellbound by Tony and Syndee sharing their real stories that touched on mental health support and overcoming adversity."

Assistant Principal Bruestle added, "It

is so important for our students to understand the relevance of taking care of their mental health and the resources that they have within our school community to provide support when needed, and I am so thankful we were able to engage in this important dialogue as a school."

At the end of the day, everyone was looking forward to the fruits of the ongoing partnership with the FJSHS and ASL.

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Garnet Health Doctors Urgent Care, Primary Care and Specialty Care Office to open in Goshen

BY JERRY DUNLAVEY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GARNET HEALTH DOCTORS
AND

JOSEPH CHAVEZ CAREY, MD, FAAFP

PRIMARY CARE MEDICAL DIRECTOR, GARNET
HEALTH DOCTORS



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS
Jerry Dunlavey



Joseph Chavez
Carey, MD, FAAFP

Garnet Health Doctors is opening a new location in Goshen on Monday, May 10. This new practice is an extension of Garnet Health Doctors' multi-specialty services – and will be Garnet Health Doctors' ninth location in Orange and Sullivan counties.

The location, at 102 Clowes Avenue in the Goshen Plaza, is right off exit 124 of Route 17. This newly constructed, state-of-the-art facility will offer Primary Care, Urgent Care, Endocrinology and Rheumatology Care, as well as laboratory and X-ray services.

The facility was specially designed to provide a welcoming, healing environment for patients. Plus, with more than 16,000 square feet, it will be roomy and comfortable with plenty of space to ensure social distancing as a continued precaution against COVID-19. As Garnet Health does at all its locations, it will aggressively clean, disinfect and sanitize, and employ numerous other safeguards to keep patients and staff safe.

The Goshen practice will be open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. for doctor's appointments. Urgent Care is available every day of the week from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Don't delay your care; get the diagnoses, treatments and services you need, when you need them. To make an appointment at the Goshen location, call (845) 333-7200. Or, schedule an appointment by visiting garnethealth.org/doctors or through the new Garnet Health app, which can be

downloaded from the App Store or, for androids, Google Play.

By receiving care at the Goshen practice, patients will benefit from a seamless connection to Garnet Health's network of doctor's offices, hospitals, outpatient centers, technology and high-quality services. Garnet Health Doctors' physicians are Board-certified, highly experienced and expertly trained in their fields.

If an in-person appointment is not convenient, telehealth is an easy way to talk to a provider via a phone call or live video. This means you don't have to leave your home – and that you can receive care from anywhere. Most insurance plans cover telehealth.

The new Garnet Health app is free. It provides access to MyChart health information resources, including Visit Notes, which summarize information provided by your physician. The app also makes it easy to find a doctor, location or service; gives driving directions to our locations; the ability to schedule an appointment with Garnet Health Doctors; online bill pay; and news and information. Visit Notes also is accessible through Garnet Health's MyChart app, which organizes a patient's medical records. The MyChart app also is a convenient way to receive test results, schedule appointments and request prescription refills.

To set up an appointment at any Garnet Health Doctors location, call (845) 333-7575. To learn more, visit garnethealth.org/doctors, download the Garnet Health app

or call our Bethel office at (845) 333-6600, the Callicoon office at (845) 333-6800, the Goshen office at (845) 333-7200, the Harris office at (845) 794-5335, the Liberty office at (845) 333-6900, our

Livingston Manor office at (845) 439-3579, the Middletown office at (845) 333-7575, the Monroe office at (845) 333-7830 or the Monticello office at (845) 333-6500.

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NEWS NOTES IN HEALTHCARE



WMCHC receives largest weekly allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine

**DOH Response attributed
to joint lobbying efforts**

Officials for Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers (WMCHC) confirmed that they have received their highest weekly allocation of COVID-19 vaccines to date, 2000 doses of Moderna, from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH).

Wayne Memorial Hospital (WMH) received 500 doses. WMCHC immediately announced two clinics this week in Pike County and in Honesdale to distribute the vaccines.

The supply is a direct response to repeated requests for more COVID-19 vaccines for their underserved areas by WMCHC, Wayne Memorial Hospital, the Pike County commissioners and State Senator Lisa Baker. DOH Executive Deputy Secretary Keara Klinepeter, MSHCPM, confirmed last week in writing to the Commissioners that additional vaccines would be forwarded to WMCHC and WMH.

Up until now, both Wayne and Pike counties, especially Pike, have ranked low in the state for percentage of vaccines received and administered.

"We are grateful that the Department of Health has heard our pleas and has agreed to supply us with these new additional shipments of vaccine," said Frederick



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

People wait in line for the COVID-19 vaccine at the Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers' site at the Stourbridge Professional Complex, Honesdale on February 5.

Jackson, WMCHC executive director. "To date, there has been a clear historical disparity between rural counties and urban areas. The state's own data shows our areas are vaccinated 30% to 50% less than their urban and suburban counterparts."

While Pike does not have a hospital of its own, Senator Baker and the Commissioners emphasized in discussions with the Department of Health last month that Wayne Memorial was a perfectly-capable healthcare delivery network for Pike.

"This progress marks a significant turning point in the equitable distribution of the vaccine in our area, and we are grateful for the community partnerships, especial-

ly those with Wayne Memorial and Senator Baker, that have helped to shift the tide," said Chairman Matthew Osterberg on behalf of the Pike County Commissioners. "We will continue to work toward getting the vaccine to all eligible local residents who want to receive it. We remain ready and willing to support mass vaccination clinics and other such efforts to achieve this goal."

While headquartered in Honesdale in Wayne County, Jackson pointed out that Wayne Memorial Health System serves more than just Wayne and Pike Counties. "When we request the vaccine, it is for Wayne, Pike, Southern Susquehanna (Forest City), and the Carbondale region

of Lackawanna County," he said, "our requests should not be looked at only through the lens of Wayne County demographics."

Jackson added that, in addition to the Pike County initiatives, Pennsylvania State Representative Jonathan Fritz, as well as Senator Baker, have also been working with WMCHC to support the needs of the Forest City Region. On Saturday, March 13, more than 500 vaccines were distributed at the Community Health Centers' Forest City Site.

All in need of a vaccine are asked to sign up via the hospital/WMCHC website at COVID Vaccine Registration - Wayne Memorial Hospital, wmh.org.

May is Stroke Awareness Month

**A Stroke Survivor's Story -
Christopher Robson**

"My legs were wobbly and my mouth, I couldn't talk right, it felt numb and floppy," said Christopher Robson, 51, of that day in March when suddenly nothing in his world felt right.

Robson is a stroke survivor, one of several survivors whose stories Wayne

Memorial is sharing during Stroke Awareness Month, an observance that calls for increased awareness of the signs and symptoms of stroke and encourages people to act FAST (Face drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulty, Time to call 911).

Robson, a manufacturing engineer from Honesdale, said when his stroke happened he knew that "something was 'electrically' different." Standing in his workshop in his garage, reaching for a

battery charger, his arm felt "super-glued, like a big blob of dead fish." He didn't fall but lowered himself to the ground and called his wife to contact 911 and then his daughter to help him.

The EMS crew understood immediately what was going on, said Robson. "They had this energy, very focused, like they knew the clock was ticking." When a stroke occurs, minutes count, every minute lost means loss of brain tissue or function.

The ambulance's EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians) had already alerted Wayne Memorial Hospital, a certified primary stroke center that was recently awarded the American Heart Association's highest stroke award, the "Get with the Guidelines" Gold Plus award. When Robson arrived, the Stroke Alert Response Team was ready for him. Within minutes, he was given a CT scan to determine what type of stroke he was having and then set up via teleconfer-

NEWS NOTES IN HEALTHCARE



ence with a board-certified neurologist from Geisinger Health System.

"They gave me tPA and then took me to the helipad," Robson remembered, "it all happened really fast."

Tissue Plasminogen Activator (tPA) helps in restoring blood flow to the brain—"it's also called a clot buster drug," said Stanley Skonieczki, MD, the medical director of Wayne Memorial's Emergency Department. "As a certified primary stroke center, we are authorized to administer this life-saving drug when appropriate, but to be effective, it must be given within three hours, or up to four-and-a-half hours, after the onset of symptoms."

"It was 'crystal clear' to me that everyone at Wayne Memorial knew exactly what they were doing," said Robson, adding, "As a manufacturing engineer, believe me, I can sense when something is not right with the team in the room. There was none of that. These folks had everything under control. And because of that, I really wasn't scared or uncomfortable."

Robson was life-flighted to Geisinger Wyoming Valley where he underwent a

breakthrough type of surgical procedure called "stent retrieval thrombectomy" to restore blood flow to the brain. During this procedure, a catheter is threaded into an artery at the groin and up through the neck, until it reaches the blood clot causing the stroke. Using x-ray guided imaging, a "stent retriever" is inserted into the catheter. The stent reaches past the clot, expands to stretch the walls of the artery so blood may flow, and the clot is "retrieved." Removing blood clots from the brain leads to better outcomes for stroke patients.

The procedure is performed under conscious or moderate sedation.

"I was awake and it hurt like heck! But I'm here today because of all the teamwork and fast thinking by Wayne Memorial's staff. Really, I can't thank them enough."

Later, Robson was transferred to the Wayne Memorial-Good Shepherd Inpatient Rehabilitation Center to undergo intense physical therapy.

What brought on the stroke? While there are well-known risk factors, Robson said he doesn't fall into any of the usual categories. For example, he doesn't have



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Christopher Robson with Maura McGowan, DPT at Wayne Memorial Rehabilitation Services/Delaware Street.

high blood pressure or a history of smoking. What about a family history? "Odd thing is, my sister had a stroke, too, on the same day as I did—March 12th." Robson said he and his medical advisers are still not sure what brought on the stroke, but they are looking at everything, including any possible cardiac issues that may not have been fully identified.

Today, less than a month after his stroke, Robson is in outpatient occupational and speech therapy at Wayne Memorial Hospital's Delaware Street Rehab facility. During a recent visit,

accompanied by his wife, Wayne Highlands High School Band Director Betty Ann, Robson reiterated how thankful he was. "The staff training in the hospital's E-R really showed through, and I'm grateful for that."

Christopher Robson did the right thing: he did not ignore his symptoms. He called for help rather than hoping things would just go away. If you or somebody you know experiences the signs of stroke, call 911 immediately. Think FAST: Facial drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulty = Time to call for help!

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