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safety
page 2



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Prepare fireplaces for safe use this season

As hours of daylight shorten and fall gives way to winter, thoughts shift from fall foliage to spending time cuddling under warm blankets and being cozy indoors. A fireplace can improve the ambiance of any room and help to create a warm and welcoming gathering spot.

Home fireplaces typically are wood-burning or gas. Though maintenance for these fireplaces differs, certain preparatory steps must be taken to prepare a fireplace for winter.

Clear the clutter

Items can accumulate in areas that are not in use, and a fireplace is no exception. Take a few hours to remove any belongings from in front of the fireplace and clean the mantle thoroughly.

Have the chimney cleaned

Hire a professional chimney cleaning company to inspect the chimney and clean it thoroughly before winter. A chimney should be cleaned once a year, or after about every 80 fires. The National Fire Protection Association says failure to properly clean chimneys is one of the leading contributors to home fires. That's due to creosote, a highly flammable residue that builds up in the flue that lines the chimney.

Inspect the interior

The interior of a wood-burning fireplace is likely lined with fire bricks. Check for cracks and loose joints. Hire a professional mason to make any repairs, as special materials are needed to withstand the heat of fires.

Install a chimney cap and screen

According to Family Handyman,

a chimney cap is a protective covering that goes over the top of the chimney. It is made of steel or copper mesh with a cap on top. This protects the chimney from rain and downdrafts and keeps animals and debris from getting into the chimney.

Prune overhanging branches

If there are trees close to the home and the chimney, cut them back, as they can be a fire hazard. Branches and leaves also can restrict the proper draft of the chimney.

Assess the outdoor vent

Gas fireplaces typically emit exhaust through a vent in the home. Remove any blockages from the vent, including leaves, cobwebs and debris.

Check glass or other coverings

The glass or face of the fireplace helps regulate carbon monoxide exposure and protects people from the flames. Be sure the glass covering is intact.

Clean ceramic logs

Gas fireplaces use ceramic logs, rocks or beads that can become dusty. Clean them prior to use. Dirty ceramic logs can be a fire hazard and produce an unpleasant burning smell.

Check the blower and pilot

If the fireplace has an electric blower, clean and dust it so it doesn't become clogged. Inspect the pilot light for any wear and tear that includes wiring or structural issues.

It takes several steps to prepare fireplaces for cold weather seasons when they're most likely to be used with frequency.



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What's ahead for the new year?

BY MEIR HOROWITZ

The annual Medicare open enrollment period is finally here, so now's the time to think about your needs for 2024. The federal government has made a number of changes to Original Medicare (Parts A and B), as well as Part D plans for the coming year, that could affect how much you pay out of pocket for your care. Here are a few of the most important changes to be aware of.

1. Expanded access to Extra Help

The Medicare Extra Help program helps low-income seniors pay for their prescription drug costs. In 2023, single adults with annual incomes less than \$21,870 and resources worth less than \$16,600 and married couples with annual incomes less than \$29,580

and resources worth less than \$33,249 qualify for this program.

Resources include money in bank and retirement accounts. But they don't include your home, one car, burial plots, up to \$1,500 for burial expenses, furniture, or other household or personal items.

Currently, there are two tiers of Extra Help: partial and full. Beginning in 2024, all those eligible for partial Extra Help will automatically become eligible for full Extra Help. The Social Security Administration website has more information about how to apply.

2. No co-pays on Part D-covered drugs once you reach catastrophic coverage

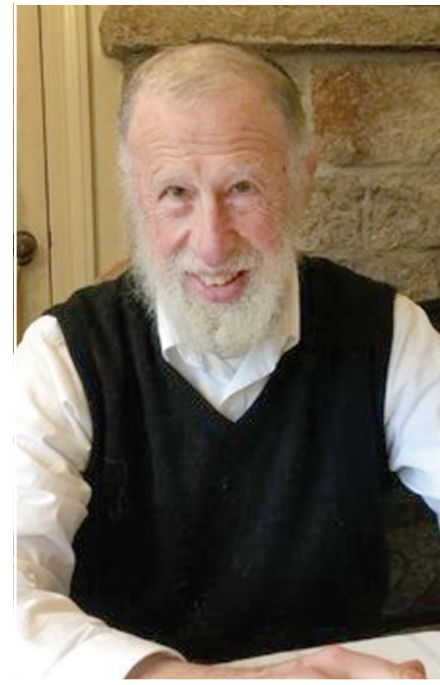
Once your out-of-pocket spending reaches \$8,000 for the year,

you won't have a co-pay for any Part D-covered prescription drugs for the rest of the year. Payments made on your behalf by other entities, like Medicare's Extra Help program, count toward the \$8,000.

This is a change from 2023, where you face a reduced co-pay of no more than 5% for Part D-covered prescription drugs if your out-of-pocket spending exceeds \$7,400 for the year.

3. Coverage for chronic pain treatment

Medicare will start covering monthly treatments for those who have suffered from persistent or recurring chronic pain for at least three months. These services include pain assessment, medication management, and care coordination and planning. You will



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS
Meir Horowitz

still have to pay your Part B deductible and copay, though.

4. Expanded coverage for mental health services

In 2023, Medicare covers mental health services provided by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists,



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clinical nurse specialists, clinical social workers, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants. In 2024, this will expand to also include services provided by marriage and family therapists and mental health counselors.

In addition, Medicare will also cover intensive outpatient programs provided by hospitals, community mental health centers, federally qualified health centers, and rural health clinics, as well as partial hospitalization services.

5. Option to join Medicare Advantage plan or Part D plan during special enrollment periods and the general enrollment period

Medicare offers special enrollment periods to those experiencing exceptional circumstances, like a natural disaster, incarceration, an employer or health plan error, losing Medicaid coverage, or other emergencies. This gives these individuals the opportunity to enroll in Original Medicare, which is composed of Part A (hospital insurance) and Part B (medi-

cal insurance).

Starting in 2024, individuals enrolling in Medicare during a special enrollment period will have two months to sign up for a Medicare Advantage plan or a Part D plan if they choose. This coverage will begin the first day of the month after the Medicare Advantage plan or Part D plan gets your request to join.

Individuals enrolling during the general enrollment period for those who didn't sign up for Original Medicare when they became eligible can also sign up for a Part D plan during their first two months after signing up for Part B.

If you have any questions about your Medicare coverage, don't hesitate to reach out for clarification. For this, and any other Medicare related issues, feel free to contact me

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Are you 'living well in the community'?

BY ACTION TOWARD INDEPENDENCE

Did you know that more than one in three adults in the United States has prediabetes and many don't even know it?

Diabetes is a disease that occurs when your blood glucose, or also called blood sugar, is too high. When it is not managed, diabetes can damage the eyes, kidneys, nerves and heart and is even linked to some types of cancer. If you have been diagnosed with diabetes, taking charge of your health as soon as possible can help you prevent other significant health problems.

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month, and it is a time when Action Toward Independence and the Joseph P. Dwyer Vet2Vet of Sullivan County do their part to raise awareness of

this important public health issue and encourage people to learn more about it.

One way is to learn more about basic "healthy living" and health literacy. Here at ATI, we are pleased to announce the offering of the "Living Well in the Community" (LWC) workshop. LWC is a ten-week workshop for people who want to set goals to support their overall quality of life and wellbeing.

Those who participate will be able to identify what is meaningful to them and then set "quality of life" goals around ways they want to make their lives better.

With the assistance of our trained facilitators, (and one of them is a Veteran Peer Advocate) individuals will make progress toward their goals by applying

problem-solving skills and managing emotions like frustration and discouragement. They will be able to discover tools and skills that can make goal achievement easier, like communicating effectively and finding important resources.

Participants will also be able



to explore ways to improve their overall health by changing daily habits and practice self-advocacy and systems-advocacy to help them make changes that can support them and others in

living well environments. In the Living Well in the Community Workshop, participants can also explore and learn about other goals such as healthy reactions, staying on course, healthy communication, seeking information, eating well, physical activity, advocacy, and self-maintenance.

Sessions will be held over a 10-course weekly session that will last from two-to-four hours per session. Meetings will be held in person at our office in Monticello at 309 E. Broadway, Suite A. For those who have transportation or accessibility concerns, a Zoom option will be available. The best thing about this program is that it is FREE!

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It's not too late to vaccinate

BY VINCENT KURZROCK

The Sullivan County Public Health office wants to remind everyone that if they would like the COVID vaccine, it is still available.

If you would like your vaccine, it is always best to check with your local healthcare provider. For those with health insurance, most plans will cover the expenses should they come with getting the shot. However, you may need to use approved, in-network healthcare facilities or pharmacies.

In accordance with the CDC, it is completely safe to get the flu vaccine on top of the COVID vaccine. You can also receive both vaccines in the same visit.

Per the CDC, the new vaccines being offered should prove effective against the newest strains.

“Despite the beautiful weather, it is Fall, which means respiratory virus season,” said Public Health Director Karen Holden, “Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent getting sick.”

Both flu and COVID vaccines protect against viruses.”

Holden recommends both for anyone who is eligible to protect against serious illness, hospitalization, and death.

It is always best to check with your healthcare provider if they

will administer the COVID-19 vaccine. If not, the following pharmacies have confirmed to Public Health that they can administer or are offering the COVID shot. You can make appointments at the following locations:

- Riverside Remedies, Callicoon, 845-887-3030
- K&K Pharmacy, Liberty, 845-292-3430
- The Medicine Shoppe, Liberty, 845-292-8200
- Walgreens, Liberty, 845-292-4114
- Walgreens, Monticello, 845-791-1301
- Rock Hill Pharmacy, Rock Hill, 845-791-1515
- Shoprite Pharmacy, Monticello, 845-794-0237
- Walmart Pharmacy, Monticello, 845-796-7200

While no new locations have started offering the vaccine, Public Health of Liberty will update when there is a new location available.

“Vaccination has been proven to be the single most effective way to prevent serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19,” said Holden, “Don't wait, vaccinate!”

If you are unsure about the vaccine, or have any questions, you can contact Sullivan County Public Health at 845-292-5910.



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- Seminars & Roundtables
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GLP-1 Agonists: balancing weight loss and diabetes management

BY SHELLY DEHAAN, MPA, RD, CDCES,
CDN, CDTC DIRECTOR, GARNET HEALTH
DIABETES AND NUTRITION COUNSELING
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We have all seen the commercials. The jingles have ear wormed their way into our everyday lives—the singing, dancing, happy people all lowering their A1C and losing weight, using drugs like Trulicity®, Rybelsus® and Ozempic® to manage their Type 2 diabetes.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), of the 37 million Americans (about one in 10) who have diabetes, approximately 90% to 95% have Type 2 diabetes, a

chronic condition that requires careful management, often including lifestyle changes, diet, exercise and medication.

Among the various treatment options available, medications known as GLP-1 agonists have gained significant attention, due to their potential to help with both blood sugar control and weight loss. But increased use of these medications for weight loss alone is causing a shortage, putting people with Type 2 diabetes at risk.

What Are GLP-1 Agonists, and How Do They Work?

People with Type 2 diabetes usually experience a decrease in the production of important

hormones. One is insulin, which helps regulate blood sugar levels. Others are called incretins, which are naturally found in the body and include gastric inhibitory peptide (GIP) and glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists. When working properly, incretins tell the pancreas to put out insulin, which is then released into the bloodstream, telling surrounding cells to convert sugar in the blood to energy.

Incretin-based therapies mimic the action of the naturally occurring GLP-1 hormones in the body and have been used to treat Type 2 diabetes for 17 years.

GLP-1 agonist medications primarily work in four ways:

- Slow down stomach empty-

ing. GLP-1 medications help keep food in the stomach longer, making you feel full sooner and allowing for better food absorption.

- Reduce the amount of sugar produced by the liver. This helps keep blood sugar levels stable between meals.

- Increase the release of insulin from the pancreas. Another way blood sugar levels remain stable between meals is through the release of insulin when food is eaten, which enables sugar from the meal to be used for energy.

- Promote the feeling of being full. Receptors in the brain receive a signal telling the body to stop eating.

The Benefits of GLP-1 Agonists for Type 2 Diabetes

When GLP-1 medications are used in addition to healthy eating and physical activity, they can offer many benefits:

- Improved Blood Sugar Control. By promoting insulin release and reducing glucagon secretion, GLP-1 agonists help the body maintain more stable blood sugar levels.
- Weight Loss. GLP-1 agonists have appetite-reducing effects that can lead to substantial weight loss, which is beneficial for individuals with Type 2 diabetes, since obesity is a significant risk factor for the condition.
- Cardiovascular Benefits. Some GLP-1 agonists have shown cardiovascular benefits, including a 22% reduction in the risk of heart attacks and strokes, which are common complications of uncontrolled diabetes.

Weighing the Weight-Loss Benefits of GLP-1 Agonists

GLP-1 medications are undoubtedly a game changer for managing Type 2 diabetes. But as more people use these drugs strictly for weight loss, the side effects cannot be ignored:

- Shortage and Accessibility. The surge in demand for GLP-1 agonists for weight loss has led to shortages and increased costs. People who genuinely need these drugs for glycemic control may face difficulties accessing them, which puts them at risk and can negate the positive gains made in controlling their disease.

- Inadequate Monitoring. Using GLP-1 agonists for weight loss without proper medical supervision can lead to unmonitored blood sugar levels. This can put individuals with



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Type 2 diabetes at risk of hypoglycemia, a potentially dangerous condition characterized by low blood sugar levels.

- Potential Side Effects. Like any medication, GLP-1 agonists have side effects, including nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. More serious side effects, such as pancreatitis and potential for thyroid cancer, are rare. Using GLP-1 agonists without proper medical guidance can lead to an increased risk of these adverse effects.

Balancing the Benefits and Risks

While GLP-1 agonists are valuable tools in the management of Type 2 diabetes, they are not the magic bullet for weight loss we'd like them to be. They are designed to be used in tandem with the tried-and-true tenets of living a healthy lifestyle and preventing diabetes: eating healthy foods and exercising regularly. It is crucial for individuals to

use these medications under the guidance of a healthcare professional, and for their intended purpose: managing diabetes. Always consult with a healthcare provider to determine the most appropriate treatment plan for your specific health needs—and help ensure that those with Type 2 diabetes can benefit from these valuable medications without unnecessary risks.

Garnet Health is offering a scientifically proven and effective lifestyle-enhancement program that can help prevent Type 2 diabetes. The CDC-led National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) can help you make lifestyle changes to prevent or delay Type 2 diabetes and other serious health problems. The free 12-month program will teach you how to make better food choices, increase physical activity, and find helpful ways to cope with problems and stress. To see if you qualify, call (845) 333-2705 or visit doihaveprediabetes.org.

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Liven up holiday gatherings:

Talk about death

STORY AND PHOTO BY WILLOW BAUM



Why on earth would I suggest you spoil the festivities with such an unsavory subject?

First, the topic of mortality need not be a downer. Au contraire. The reminder that existence is fleeting can be an efficient means to clarify, make meaning and stir action now. What would you do differently if you had just one year to live? Maybe let go of a grudge and delete TikTok?

Consider the ancient Greeks and Romans. They tucked memento mori talisman -- skulls, wilted flowers, angels -- into their togas and went on to build cathedrals and create art and philosophy based on a simple, yet profound idea. Memento mori is Latin for "remember that you must die." In other words... Life is short. So make the most of it.

Second, the holidays can bring together generations from far-flung geographies to break bread and eat pie. Why default to talking about people, politics or current events when you can gently memento mori your way into forging deeper connections with each other -- while you're all actually alive?

As an end-of-life planner and "death doula" which is a non-medical professional who offers emotional, practical and educational support to folks planning for or navigating life's final chapters, I typically ask new clients two questions from the excellent "Your Conversation Starter Guide" which you too can find at <https://theconversationproject.org>:

"What matters most to you now and through the end of your life?" and

"What does a good day look like for you?"

No matter your health or age, answer these questions for yourself now before you spring it on your loved ones.

Grab paper and pen.

Set a 10-minute timer.

Jot down whatever comes up.

For you, is it...

... spending time with people you love?

... indulging in a favorite pastime such as gardening, biking, deer hunting?

... visiting a place you've always wanted to see but haven't yet?

... finishing a passion project?

... mending a broken relationship?

Well then why aren't you doing these things now?

Death may be the biggest "life hack" of all. Every three months I review my goals and priorities to adjust them, and "remember that I must die" (at anytime). I ask myself what is the best use of my time and energy if I were no longer around in ninety days? In the midst of perpetual flux -- world events, personal circumstances

and me -- this exercise helps me take a step back and recenter on living in congruence with my values.

Don't wait. Tomorrow is not guaranteed to any of us. Writer Annie Dillard says it best, "How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives."

Are you ready to be the one to start the conversation among your loved ones around a topic few folks want to talk about?

Our own community has mourned the loss of teens and adults in the prime of their lives claimed by tragic accidents. Start there?

Otherwise try out this opening line apropos to living in a time of global pandemic and escalating warfare: Who knows what tomorrow holds. What do you say we make a game out of answering a couple questions that can help us know each other better and also prepare us to make good decisions for each other when death does come?

Encourage everyone of every age to speak to the two questions above. Don't just single out elders because statistically they're likely next up on the conveyor belt headed to the grave or someone with a life-limiting illness. Everyone gets a turn. If someone gives a vague answer, go deeper. Ask them:

What does [what they said] mean to you?

What experiences have you had with death and dying?

How did those experiences affect the way you live your life?

If children are in the mix, by all means engage them. Normalizing death as an inevitable fact of life is doing the next generation a solid. By the time kids reach five years old, most understand that death means the person or pet they love aren't coming back. A friend tells me, "Do you know how many goldfish we pray for at Sunday school?" Personal stories are a great way to pass down lessons learned and convey how we want to be cared for. Tease out the ones in your family.

To talk about Death IS to talk about Life.

Life is expansion and contraction.

Beginnings and endings.

Joy and pain.

Do you choose to experience the fullness of our finite time here, and take part directly in the ups and downs that we and those we love will inevitably face?

Sure, the subject of dying can stir uncomfortable feelings. You know what's more unpleasant than thinking and talking about death? Regret. Being asked one day in an Emergency Room to make life-prolonging decisions for a loved one without having any idea about what makes life worth living for them. And then wondering for the rest of your life if you did right by them.

GUIDLINES

Conversation about what matters most in our life with the people who matter most is in itself an act of love. Clarity also allows you to enlist your healthcare providers in supporting your agenda.

Start the conversation now, gently and with curiosity.

You don't need a lawyer (yet).

You don't want to wait until a health crisis.

You don't need to make it all "Mom...Dad, we need to talk..." heavy and weird.

Instead, check out these two excellent resources to guide you step-by-step, at your own pace through talking about your preferences for care now through the end of life.

And don't just ask your parents to do this. Make completing these guides a family affair. You may discover the conversations can be surprising, connected and expansive.

The Conversation Project -
<https://theconversationproject.org>

Five Wishes.org - <https://FiveWishes.org>

Contact info:

Willow Baum lives in Callicoon, NY. As an end-of-life planner, educator and death doula at FriendForTheEnd.com, she guides individuals, families and groups to make life's final chapters more tranquil and meaningful. For more resources around death and dying, follow <https://medium.com/@willowabaum> and join the Facebook Group "Dying Well-Western Catskills."

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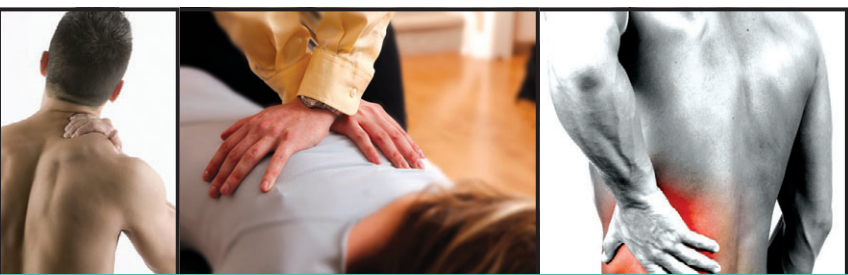
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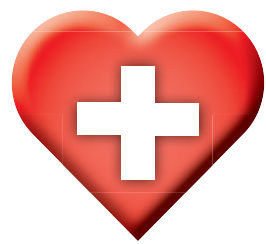


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NEWS NOTES IN HEALTHCARE

Garnet Health Medical Center earns designation

Garnet Health Medical Center is pleased to announce that its nationally accredited bariatric surgery program has received a new designation from the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP), a joint quality program of the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBBS).

MBSAQIP is a comprehensive, nationwide surgical-quality program aimed at ensuring safe and effective metabolic and bariatric surgery. Surgical outcomes focus on weight loss

and the treatment of obesity-related diseases, including diabetes and sleep apnea, as well as others. Research shows that accredited centers experience fewer complications and better outcomes than nonaccredited facilities.

"At Garnet Health, we are committed to the highest standards of surgical care," said Jonathan Schiller, President and CEO, Garnet Health. "This national designation recognizes our bariatric team for their high-quality care and exemplary experience, and it reflects our proven record of adhering to the most rigorous standards in

surgical quality—to minimize complications, improve outcomes and save lives."

As an MBSAQIP-accredited hospital, Garnet Health Medical Center also becomes an ACS Surgical Quality Partner, signifying the hospital's dedication to consistently improving procedures and approaches, while maintaining a critical eye on process at every step.

"The Surgical Quality Partner designation lets our patients know we are dedicated to quality and relentless self-improvement," said Janet Klein, MS, RDN, CDN, CDCES, Program Director, Garnet Health Medical Center



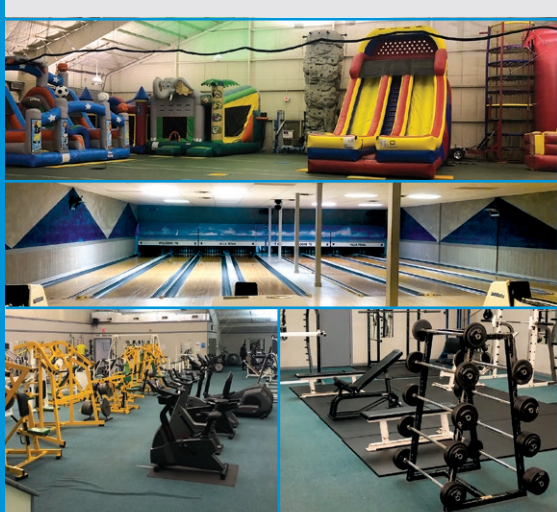
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Jonathan Schiller Janet Klein

Bariatric Surgery. "Patients have always trusted that the care they receive at Garnet Health adheres to the most rigorous standards in surgical quality. It's quite gratifying to have the dedication, compassion and excellence of our team be recognized with this new designation by the ACS."

For more information about Garnet Health and their bariatric program, visit garnethealth.org/bariatrics.

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PRASAD Children’s Dental Health Program’s 25th anniversary

We are delighted to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the PRASAD Children’s Dental Health Program (PRASAD CDHP)! We are extremely proud to have had the opportunity to help so many children in need over the years.

We are grateful to our dedicated trustees, staff, and volunteers, as well as our generous donors and community partners who have helped us bring happy, healthy smiles to thousands of children. We love our work and are committed to continuing to improve the oral health of children and being a model program that responds to community needs.

PRASAD CDHP has provided dental health education classes and dental services to more than 90,000 children in Sullivan County.

There is even more wonderful news: We are launching a new and improved Mobile Dental Clinic later this year! Thanks to a grant from The Mother Cabrini Health Foundation in support of our program, we can replace our much beloved, but now outdated, Mobile Dental Clinic. What a wonderful way to celebrate our 25th birthday and look forward to many more years of serving children in need of care.

Please join us to celebrate this significant milestone with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Tuesday, November 14 from 3:00 - 5:30 p.m. at 25 Sullivan Avenue, Liberty, NY 12754.

For more information, to volunteer or to donate, go to www.prasadcdhp.org or call the PRASAD main office at 845-434-0376.

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