



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Teams WITH Oswego County Schools to 'Fight the Bite'

PATTY RITCHIE May 12, 2015

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Students and Families Recruited in Latest Effort to Raise Awareness and Stop EEE

State Senator Patty Ritchie is once again teaming with Oswego County health officials and educators to raise awareness and help fight the deadly mosquito-borne disease, Eastern Equine Encephalitis, or EEE.

This week, Senator Ritchie distributed more than 20,000 EEE educational flyers to all nine Oswego County school districts. The flyers contain information about EEE and ways that residents can protect themselves, and was created in cooperation with Oswego County's Health Department and the family of Maggie Sue Wilcox, the little New Haven girl who died in 2011 after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

“Here in Central New York, we’ve seen firsthand the devastating effects of EEE,” said Senator Ritchie. “When it comes to arming ourselves against this deadly disease, knowledge is our best defense. I would like to thank my partners in the effort to teach children about the dangers of EEE, namely Oswego County, and our local schools, as well as parents and children, for taking the time to learn about how to protect themselves from this disease.”

“Oswego County is a hotbed for mosquitoes that carry the EEE virus and with warmer weather and summer on the horizon, it’s especially important that we take steps to protect ourselves and our loved ones,” said Oswego County Health Department Public Health Director Jiancheng Huang. “Teaching people about the steps they can take to safeguard themselves from EEE is critically important, and I would like to thank Senator Ritchie for partnering with us to get this vital information out to students and families across our county.”

“Ever since the death of our beloved Maggie Sue, our family has been vigilant in working to get the word out about the dangers presented by mosquitoes and the diseases they carry,” said Donna Wilcox, aunt of Maggie Sue Wilcox. “Senator Ritchie has been a tremendous supporter of our efforts, and we can’t thank her enough for once again getting this information out to local schools, which will help to arm children with the knowledge they need to stay healthy and out of harm’s way.”

It’s the fifth year in a row that Senator Ritchie and county health leaders have distributed the flyers to children through the area’s schools.

The educational program is part of a wider effort by Senator Ritchie to combat EEE, including more than a half million dollars she’s secured in additional State Budget funding—including \$175,000 in the current year’s budget—to help Oswego County’s fight against the disease, including:

- * Supporting free waste tire disposal events that have removed 20,000 tires from Oswego County backyards and roadsides. Waste tires, which serve to collect stagnant rainwater, provide the perfect breeding environment for mosquitoes, with each tire supporting one million or more of the potentially disease-carrying bugs. The next free waste tire disposal event will be held on August 15th, and details can be found at Senator Ritchie’s website.
- * Doubling the testing areas across the county that have been known to harbor the EEE virus;
- * Hosting vaccine clinics to protect horses and raise awareness among farmers and horse owners about the dangers of disease; and
- * Creating an educational video about EEE, and providing for distribution to schools and community organizations.

In addition, Senator Ritchie wrote the law that increased state reimbursement to counties, including Oswego, for mosquito control, and legislation that created a special panel of state health experts who are seeking ways to push for a human vaccine for EEE and other vector-borne diseases. That panel is supposed to report its findings by the end of the year.

EEE typically appears in this region in the early summer until the first frost, when mosquitoes are no longer active. In the past three decades, five New Yorkers have died from EEE—all in Oswego and Onondaga Counties.

Information about EEE and the upcoming tire disposal event all can be [found here](#).