



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Local legislators, local agencies remind area residents: September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month

THOMAS F. O'MARA September 16, 2015

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**Elmira, N.Y., September 16**— State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), Assemblyman Chris Friend (R,C,I-Big Flats) and Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning) today reminded area residents that September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month and several local agencies have joined together in the effort to provide information and raise awareness.

In a joint statement, O'Mara, Friend and Palmesano said, "We greatly appreciate this opportunity to join the Chemung County Child Advocacy Center and other local agencies in this critical public awareness campaign to better address infant mortality. By providing information, enhancing education and raising awareness, these terrible and tragic deaths can

be prevented.”

The Chemung County Child Advocacy Center (CAC), along with its partner agencies within the county including Family Services of Chemung County, Inc., the Chemung County Department of Social Services, Chemung County Health Department, Chemung County District Attorney’s Office and all local law enforcement agencies are partnering in the local effort. They are encouraging any area resident who has been impacted by the death of a child, or would like additional information on infant and child deaths, safe sleep, or positive social-emotional development for youth and families, to contact Chemung County Child Advocacy Center Coordinator Dina O’Herron at 607-737-8449.

The Child Advocacy Center and the Chemung County Health Department, at their respective agencies, will be displaying a clothesline of onesies in honor of those infant lives lost too soon. The Chemung County Child Advocacy Center is located at 304 Hoffman Street, Elmira, NY 14905. The Chemung County Health Department is located at 103 Washington Street, Elmira, NY 14901.

Infant mortality is defined as the number of infants who die during their first year of life.

Chemung County Child Advocacy Center Dina O’Herron said that the local agencies are dedicated to raising awareness about infant deaths within the community, safe sleep, and to promoting the positive, social-emotional development of our youth and overall well-being of our families.

O’Herron said, “Many area residents simply don’t realize that these incidents occur within our community. As a community and among all area families and caregivers, we need to be more aware of the risks, the underlying causes of infant mortality, and the preventive measures that can protect the lives of our children and support local families. All children deserve to say their first words, take their first steps, and grow up in safely and securely to pursue their own dreams.”

Chemung County District Attorney, Weeden A. Wetmore, said, “The death of a baby is always a tragedy but even more so when preventable. We hope this month makes parents and others caring for infants more aware of the risks of poor choices which can lead to an infant’s death. For instance they should avoid consuming excessive amounts of alcohol or ingesting drugs that may impair their judgment or physical abilities while caring for an infant. They should never co-sleep with an infant, but instead place the child in a crib, alone, on his or her back, and without pillows or other soft objects. Ignoring such risks may under certain circumstances, that is the wrong circumstances, lead to criminal liability. Let’s hope that heightened awareness of these risks leads to reduced mortality.”

According to the New York State Department of Health, six infants died in Chemung County in 2014. To date in 2015, three infants have lost their lives. Throughout New York State, there were 1,144 infant deaths in 2013.