



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Department of Health Food Safety Presentation

PATTY RITCHIE May 31, 2011

Recently, I was contacted by a number of local community groups and nonprofits from across St. Lawrence County with concerns about the state Health Department's enforcement and oversight of fundraising dinners and events.

Whether a winter chili cookoff, springtime bullhead feed, or summer chicken barbeque, these gatherings serve as critical fundraisers for many organizations and, even more, are a vital part of the social fabric of many of our local communities. In recent months, though, at least two such events were canceled over health and sanitary issues, and a third organization was forced to incur additional expense that cut deeply into their bottom line.

Responding to my request, the Department of Health hosted four informational seminars to assist local organizations in meeting state food safety standards. Over 200 people attended these forums, a clear sign that our community shares the very real concerns about food safety, and a genuine desire to comply with standards and requirements as set out in the state sanitary code.

The Department has now clarified that "religious, fraternal and charitable organizations that plan to prepare and serve food to the public at their own facility for occasional events (fewer than 52 events a year) do not require a permit to operate. They are also exempt from the equipment, plan review and pre-operational notifications applicable to commercial food

service establishments.” However, the department stressed that groups still need to follow food safety regulations and procedures to protect public health.

Click on the PDF below to view the actual DOH presentation. If you have any further questions, I urge you to contact the Department of Health's Canton office, at (315) 386-1040.