



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## **Reminder: Former NFL Quarterback Ryan Leaf to Share Story of Addiction and Recovery at Free Event**

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State Senator Patty Ritchie is reminding Central and Northern New Yorkers that she will be welcoming former NFL quarterback Ryan Leaf to Watertown Thursday for a free event, where Ryan will share his struggles with behavioral health and addiction and to carry a message of hope and recovery to students and families.

After a highly decorated college football career, Leaf was the second overall draft pick in the 1998 NFL draft. Unfortunately, Leaf's playing career was cut short due to his inability to cope with the stresses of the NFL, and as he puts it, "live on life's terms". The end of his football career weighed on Leaf heavily, both emotionally and mentally. He began to abuse prescription drugs, and what ensued was a decade-long battle with substance abuse that ultimately led to a failed suicide attempt and a near three-year stint in prison.

While serving his sentence, Leaf addressed the source of his mental and emotional anguish. He dealt honestly with his problems and came to understand the importance of accountability and self-worth. In 2014, when he left prison, Leaf was humbled and had a new outlook on life. He has since dedicated his life to recovery and has traveled the country in hopes of helping others through his cautionary tale for young people.

"Ryan Leaf is someone who in the face of tremendous obstacles, overcame his challenges and turned them into something positive—a message of hope, recovery and determination that he will share with people in our region on Thursday," said

Senator Ritchie.

“I am eager for students to hear Ryan’s story, and am hopeful that other community members will attend his evening presentation, where they can hear his inspiring message firsthand.”

On May 24th, Leaf will be speaking to approximately 1,600 high school students from Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties at the Watertown High School auditorium. That evening at 7:00 p.m., also at the Watertown High School auditorium, there will be another forum for parents, families and individuals.

The evening event—which is free of charge—is open to the public. Those interested in attending are encouraged to pre-register, and can do so by visiting [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov) or by calling (315) 782-3418.