



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie, Wilcox Family and Oswego County Join to Urge Central New Yorkers to ‘Fight the Bite’

PATTY RITCHIE May 1, 2012

| ISSUE: **HEALTH**

### **Public Education Campaign Aims to Stop EEE**

State Senator Patty Ritchie is joining with the family of Maggie Sue Wilcox and Oswego County to urge Central New York residents to “Fight the Bite” to prevent Eastern Equine Encephalitis, or EEE.

“With mosquito season right around the corner, it’s more important now than ever that Central New Yorkers take steps to protect themselves from this deadly disease. The fact is everyone is at risk—and self-defense is the best defense when it comes to safeguarding ourselves against EEE,” said Senator Ritchie. EEE is a rare but serious viral disease spread by mosquitoes. The disease has claimed five human lives in Central New York—including that of 4-year-old **Maggie Sue Wilcox** last summer—and untold numbers of horses and other large farm animals over the past four decades.

The Senator has joined forces with healthcare officials in Oswego County, as well as the Wilcox family to spread the word about EEE protection through a new, “Fight the Bite” educational flyer that is being distributed through Oswego County schools.

“The worst thing would be to have nothing positive to come out of our family’s tragedy,” said **Donna Wilcox**, Maggie Sue’s aunt. “By continuing to spread the word about EEE, we can help ensure that people in Central New York know how to protect themselves. More importantly, we can raise awareness so no other family has to go through what we have gone through.”

In addition to being available at schools, the flyer, which includes self-protection information from the Oswego County and state Health Departments, is also available through Senator Ritchie’s website – [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov) – and on her Facebook page.

“Making sure people are ‘in the know’ about how they can protect themselves from EEE is just one step we’re taking here in Oswego County to make sure no other family has to suffer like the Wilcox family has.

By stepping up our efforts here in Central New York—and doing things like doubling our EEE testing areas—we’re making sure there’s no further loss of life,” said Oswego County Legislator **Kevin Gardner** (District 13).

“All it takes is one bite to contract the deadly EEE virus. By putting education first, and making sure the public knows how to protect themselves from mosquitoes, we are making sure no other innocent lives are lost to EEE,” said Oswego County Legislator **Jack Proud** (District 7), Chairman of the Oswego County Legislature’s Health and Human Services Committee.

Distributing flyers to spread the message about EEE is just one more step Senator Ritchie is taking in the fight against this deadly disease. Since last summer's tragedy, Senator Ritchie has stepped up and:

- Assembled a panel of experts to find better ways to fight EEE
- Secured \$150,000 in the State Budget for mosquito control
- Forged closer ties with Albany and Central New York Counties battling EEE
- Created a program offering low-cost vaccines for farmers and horse owners
- Secured funding to eradicate mosquitoes on private land

The Senator has also been working with a number of other state agencies, including the Departments of Health and Environmental Conservation, who are supporting Central New York's increased efforts to safeguard the public from EEE.