



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Urges Drivers to ‘Share the Road’ WITH North Country Amish

PATTY RITCHIE September 12, 2013

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Teams With Colleges, Health, Highway Officials, Law Enforcement

to Boost Traffic Safety, Prevent Car-Buggy Crashes

State Senator Patty Ritchie is teaming with area colleges, local agencies and officials to launch a new highway safety initiative to help raise awareness of the region’s growing Amish population, and prevent vehicle-buggy crashes like those that claimed the lives of an Amish child last year, and caused tens of thousands of dollars in property damage.

The initiative targets new drivers and college students, in particular, and includes special state budget funding secured by Senator Ritchie to install as many as 100 new, reflective road hazard signs, and a new informational brochure prepared with the help of highway safety experts to remind drivers to “Share the Road” with slow-moving Amish buggies.

Participants in the effort include Senator Ritchie, all four colleges located in St. Lawrence County, County Sheriff Kevin Wells, County Clerk Mary Lou Rupp, the St. Lawrence County Traffic Safety Council, and Jefferson County’s Public Health Service.

“Many of us in the North Country are already familiar with the sight of slow-moving buggies on area highways, and know to proceed cautiously so as to avoid crashes and injury,” Senator Ritchie said. “But for thousands of college students, tourists and visitors who come here each year not expecting to encounter a horse-drawn buggy on the road, this initiative will help raise awareness, and hopefully prevent a tragedy from occurring.”

“When our four colleges reopen each fall, Northern New York sees thousands of incoming college students, many of whom come from communities across the country,” said St. Lawrence County Sheriff Kevin Wells. “Senator Ritchie is working with us to make this part of our county population aware of what’s involved in sharing the road with Amish buggies.”

The North Country has seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of Amish—and horse-drawn Amish buggies—in recent years. St. Lawrence County is now home to the state’s second-largest Amish community, and area roads are regularly traversed by the slow-moving, old-fashioned buggies favored by the religion’s adherents.

Consequently, there also has been an uptick in the number of vehicle-buggy crashes—twice as many in 2012 than the previous year, according to news reports—including a fatal crash that claimed the life of an Amish child, and others that left two children seriously injured, killed a horse, and caused tens of thousands of dollars in damage to vehicles, buggies and other property.

This month, more than 3,000 students at four area colleges—St. Lawrence University, Clarkson University, SUNY Potsdam and SUNY Canton—are receiving a new informational brochure created by Senator Ritchie, the St. Lawrence County Traffic Safety Council and Jefferson County Public Health.

The “Share the Road” brochure, also is being made available at Motor Vehicles offices operated by St. Lawrence County Clerk Rupp.

It includes information about the region’s growing Amish population and tips for drivers to avoid crashes.

“Many of our students have never seen a horse and buggy, or members of the Amish community on a roadway,” said University Police Chief John Kaplan, who oversees both the SUNY Potsdam and SUNY Canton Police Departments. “We appreciate Senator Ritchie's assistance in our effort to educate our campus community about traffic safety when traveling in Northern New York.”

Senator Ritchie said, “While sharing the road with an Amish buggy may seem like a quaint notion, it’s very important that we all understand that we are sharing the road with trucks, cyclists, farm vehicles, pedestrians and slow moving, horse-powered buggies.”

The “Share the Road” brochure is attached, and copies may be downloaded at Senator Ritchie’s website, www.ritchie.ny.gov.

Also attached is a selection of recent North Country Amish buggy accidents, culled from local news reports.

RECENT NORTH COUNTRY AMISH BUGGY-VEHICLE ACCIDENTS (Collected from local news reports)

(Dec. 12, 2012) No injuries in buggy crash on Route 812

HEUVELTON — The driver of an Amish buggy escaped injury Tuesday afternoon after a Buick Enclave crashed into the buggy’s back left wheel.

(Dec. 5, 2012) **Carthage man charged in connection with truck/buggy crash** LOWVILLE — Lewis County sheriff’s deputies have charged a Carthage man in connection with an alleged hit-and-run accident Thursday evening involving an Amish buggy.

(Aug. 21, 2012) **Man barely misses Amish buggy in vehicular collision** LOWVILLE — In a failed attempt to pass an Amish buggy, a man driving a pickup truck south on Route 12 struck a northbound vehicle after losing control and crossing the center line.

(Aug. 20, 2012) Amish baby dies following car-buggy accident

LOWVILLE — A nine-month old girl airlifted to Upstate Medical University, Syracuse, has died from injuries suffered in a Tuesday morning car-buggy crash.

(Aug. 19, 2012) **Moirra man ticketed after striking buggy in Potsdam** POTSDAM - A Moirra man was ticketed for moving from his lane unsafely after he struck an Amish buggy Sunday on Route 11 in the town of Potsdam.

(Feb. 27, 2012) **Truck strikes Amish buggy in Massena; Two children seriously injured** MASSENA - Six passengers on an Amish buggy - two adult females and four children under the age of 5 from the Bombay area - were injured when their vehicle was rear-ended by a truck on state Route 37 near the St. Lawrence Centre mall.

(Sept. 19, 2011) **City man charged after Amish buggy sideswipe** COPENHAGEN — A Watertown man was charged with failure to use due care after sideswiping an Amish buggy on Route 12 in the town of Harrisburg. No injuries were reported.

(Jan. 2, 2011) **Amish Woman Hurt In Depeyster Accident** DEPEYSTER - An Amish woman was hospitalized after being thrown from her buggy after being struck by a vehicle Sunday night in the town of Depeyster.

(Aug. 4, 2009) **Drunk Driver Allegedly Flees Amish Buggy Accident** State police say the Heuvelton man was eastbound when he struck an Amish buggy from the rear.