



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Obtains \$50,000 to Fight Heroin in St. Lawrence County

PATTY RITCHIE August 11, 2014

| ISSUE: **DRUGS, PRESCRIBED DRUGS OR PRESCRIPTIONS**

Funds Will Assist St. Lawrence County Drug Task Force

State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced she has obtained \$50,000 to help the St. Lawrence County Drug Task Force expand its efforts in the fight against the heroin epidemic sweeping the North Country.

“Earlier this year, I held a forum on the heroin and opioid crisis facing small towns across Northern New York and local law enforcement leaders told me they needed more resources to crack down on major dealers,” Senator Ritchie said. “This additional funding will help our law enforcement community focus on the criminal element responsible for bringing so much misery to so many families.”

“The St. Lawrence County Drug Task Force is very grateful to Senator Ritchie for obtaining funds that will allow us to expand our investigations into the sources of the heroin and other narcotics being sold in our communities,” said St. Lawrence County Sheriff Kevin Wells. “When we told Senator Ritchie we needed more resources, she promised to go to Albany to get us the help we needed to take back our neighborhoods.”

Across the country, state and region, heroin use is on the rise. The number of deaths from heroin overdose has doubled across the state, and the numbers of users seeking treatment for heroin and opioid abuse in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties increased 300 percent (434 percent in Oswego County) over 10 years.

As a member of the Senate Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, Senator Ritchie has been on the front lines of the fight against heroin. In May, Senator Ritchie hosted a Heroin and Opioid Abuse Forum in Watertown, where recovering addicts, law enforcement officials, drug treatment experts and friends and family members of users shared their suggestions for combating the drug.

In June, legislation sponsored by Senator Ritchie to expand insurance coverage for treating heroin addiction was signed into law. The fight to access insurance coverage for treating heroin addiction was one of the top issues identified at her recent forum. Senator Ritchie's measure was part of an 11 bill package aimed at preventing and combating abuse.

Most recently, Senator Ritchie hosted a "Shed the Meds" event in Ogdensburg, where residents disposed of thousands of individual pills totaling more than 150 pounds. The event provided people with a safe, responsible way to dispose of unwanted, unused and expired prescription medications including painkillers, opioids and narcotics—substances which are often times the gateway drugs for addiction to illegal substances such as heroin. Senator Ritchie will host three more Shed the Meds events in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties on the following dates:

- August 13: River Hospital, 4 Fuller Street, Alexandria Bay
- August 19: Carthage Area Hospital, 1001 West Street, Carthage
- September 16: Gouverneur Hospital, 77 West Barney Street, Gouverneur