



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Eight Honored WITH 'Liberty Awards' for Helping Prevent St. Lawrence County Health Care Emergency

PATTY RITCHIE May 8, 2015

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Community Sprang Into Action to Avert Possible Rabies Outbreak

State Senator Patty Ritchie today honored eight St. Lawrence County residents with the prestigious New York State Senate Liberty Medal for their work to stop a major health emergency, after a farmer and other members of the local Amish community were exposed to a rabid horse.

The eight, including a veterinarian, several county public health workers, concerned community volunteers, and employees of a regional farmer cooperative with deep ties to area Amish, all played key

and potentially lifesaving roles in identifying and locating individuals in the normally isolated community who could have been exposed to rabies, and required preventive treatment.

“When public health leaders discovered the potential for a rabies outbreak in the Amish community, they faced a very serious and difficult challenge in identifying and contacting people who might have been exposed,” said Senator Ritchie. “But they weren’t deterred and used every means available to them to spread the word quickly and effectively.”

“They stopped the disease in its tracks, and it’s my honor to present them with the New York State Senate’s Liberty Medal, for their willingness to come to the aid of their neighbors.”

In January, the farmer noticed his horse behaving strangely and the animal was later found to be infected with rabies, but not before several people and animals in the local community had been in contact with it.

Public health officials sprang into action and, with Senator Ritchie’s help, used various means to contact members of the community—including working through the Agri-Mark cooperative that hauls and stores milk for 100 area Amish farmers—to find those at risk.

Heuvelton veterinarian Dr. Jack Zeh conducted a clinic at a local farm where nearly 100 animals received vaccinations, and their owners were recruited to continue spreading the word.

Meanwhile, St. Lawrence County resident Adrian Bigelow volunteered to help public health workers go door-to-door in sub-zero temperatures to warn members of the community.

“Thanks to all these efforts, and the dedication and commitment of these individuals, 11 people received treatment and they have all been pronounced to be in good health, and free of this dreaded disease,” Senator Ritchie said.

Those honored with the Liberty Medals, one of the state’s highest civilian honors, during a ceremony at the St. Lawrence County Legislature Board Room in Canton, were:

- Dr. Jack Zeh, Town & Country Veterinary Clinic;
- Dave Elliott, Agri-Mark;
- Rochelle Pratt, St. Lawrence County Public Health Department;
- Kindra Cousineau, St. Lawrence County Public Health Department;

- Catherine Field, St. Lawrence County Public Health Department;
- Janine Giglio, who accepted a Liberty Medal on behalf of St. Lawrence County Public Health Department Preventive Services Director Laurie Macki; and
- St. Lawrence County resident Adrian Bigelow.

In addition, Dr. Karen Johnson Weiner, a professor of anthropology at SUNY Potsdam who has studied the Amish for the past three decades, was recognized by Senator Ritchie with an official Senate Proclamation for expertise, assistance and advice on issues related to the Amish community.

(Pictured from left to right in the above photo are: Dr. Karen Johnson Weiner, Dr. Jack Zeh, Adrian Bigelow, Senator Ritchie, Dave Elliott, Kindra Cousineau, Janine Giglio and Rochelle Pratt)