



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie: Future Physicians "Take a Look" at Careers in Central and Northern New York

PATTY RITCHIE September 29, 2016



State Senator Patty Ritchie joined future physicians who are currently studying at downstate medical facilities Thursday on a tour designed to encourage them to “take a look” at careers in Central and Northern New York.

Organized by the Iroquois Healthcare Association (IHA) and made possible through \$100,000 in state budget funding Senator Ritchie successfully advocated for, the “Take a Look” tours

are designed to help address the critical physician shortage in rural areas. As a result of funding Senator Ritchie fought for, IHA was able to continue the tours, enhance their outreach to medical schools, and expand into Central and Northern New York.

“It is vital that we address the critical need for physicians that we are facing,” says Senator Ritchie, who serves as Co-Chair of the Commission on Rural Resources, a group that works to address challenges unique to rural parts of our state, including those related to health care.

“Our region has a lot to offer the physicians we desperately need in our communities, and tours like this can promote the benefits of locating their practices in our region. I am grateful that the tour participants made the lengthy trip to visit our area, and I certainly hope we will once again welcome them back after they complete their residencies.”

Five internal medicine residents and one fourth-year medical student participated in the multi-day tour. All six participants are currently training in facilities located downstate, and they made the trip north to explore opportunities available within the region. Stops on the tour—which wraps up Friday—include Oswego Health and Port City Family Medicine in Oswego, Samaritan Medical Center and North Country Family Health Center in Watertown, River Hospital in Alexandria Bay, a visit in Syracuse with physician leaders from the New York Chapter of the American College of Physicians and a stop at Gouverneur Hospital, where the group was joined by Senator Ritchie.

“The upstate physician shortage is at a crucial point. The Take-A-Look tour, which is supported by Senator Ritchie, has allowed residents from New York City's teaching hospitals to understand the benefits of practicing medicine in Upstate New York,” said Gary J. Fitzgerald, president and CEO of the Iroquois Healthcare Association.

"Attracting talented medical professionals is key to the strength of any hospital," said Gouverneur Hospital CEO Marlinda LaValley. "We were so pleased to have been able to host downstate medical students at Gouverneur Hospital to introduce them to our programs and give them a firsthand look at rural medicine. We're hopeful students had a great experience and will consider returning to the North Country and practicing here."

According to a recent study by the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS), nearly three-quarters of rural hospitals across the state do not have enough primary care providers to meet current patient needs, making efforts like the Take a Look tours even more important.

The recent HANYS study, which included responses from over 100 hospitals from around the state—with more than half from the Upstate region—also found that:

- 81 percent of hospitals indicated that primary care physicians are “very difficult to recruit;”
- In rural counties, the physician supply per 100,000 individuals is 81—compared to the state average of 114;
- Half of rural hospitals surveyed have had to reduce or eliminate services due to lack of provider ability; and
- Thirty percent of New York’s physicians are over the age of 60

(Attn. photo editors: Senator Ritchie is pictured in the above photo with Take a Look tour participants and Gouverneur Hospital CEO Marlinda LaValley)