



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Building Healthy Smiles: Senator Ritchie Gets Firsthand Look at "S-Miles to Go" Program at Hannibal Central School District

PATTY RITCHIE October 17, 2016



State Senator Patty Ritchie visited Fairley Elementary School in Hannibal Monday to tour a program that is bringing much-needed dental care directly to students and giving dental students an opportunity to learn more about potential future careers in a rural setting.

Known as "S-miles to Go," the program uses portable dental equipment and a mobile dental van, which are provided and staffed by the University at Buffalo's School of Dental Medicine, to bring dental care to schools, especially in areas that have a shortage of available dental

care.

The program has operated for several years in the Southern Tier and Western New York.

After discussing the need for dental health programs earlier this year with Hannibal Central School District Superintendent Christopher Staats, Senator Ritchie worked to bring the program to Central New York. In addition, she also successfully advocated for increased budget funding for “5-miles to Go” and a study that would look at expanding the effort into the North Country.

“Too many children, especially in rural areas, do not have access to the oral healthcare they need and that could mean more serious problems down the road—like speech difficulties, tooth loss and serious infections” said Senator Ritchie, who co-chairs the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, a group that works to address the challenges unique to rural parts of the state.

“This program is not only helping to ensure they have access to the care they need, it is also strengthening health care in our region by showing dental students what it would be like to practice in rural New York State.”

Portable equipment at the Hannibal Central School District allows for cleanings, screenings, and preventative treatments. The mobile dental van includes three chairs and diagnostic equipment that enables participating dentists to fix problems identified during the screenings. By bringing this equipment to the school setting, students can conveniently receive preventative and restorative oral healthcare without having to leave campus.

Elementary and middle school students who signed up for the program already received screenings using portable equipment that was previously brought to the school. High school students are currently receiving their screenings and preventative care. With the arrival of

the mobile dental van, students needing restorative care can receive the treatment they require.

“Providing dental care is critically important to the well-being of our young people,” said Christopher Staats, Superintendent of the Hannibal Central School District. “I would like to thank Senator Ritchie for her efforts to bring this important program to our school district, which is not only providing students with access to dental care, but also teaching them good habits they can continue to practice throughout their lives.”

In addition to providing students with much-needed dental care, the program has the added benefits of providing University at Buffalo students with practical experience and the opportunity to learn more about practicing in rural areas.

“We are thrilled to have the opportunity to bring the UB S-miles to Go Program to the Hannibal Central School District. This collaboration offers our students the chance to experience the benefits of working within a rural community. Our hope is, this experience might motivate some to establish a practice in these underserved areas,” said Dr. Joseph J. Zambon, Dean of the School of Dental Medicine at the University at Buffalo.

“I am eager to see the outcome of this program in the Hannibal School District. It is an important stepping stone in the process of addressing oral healthcare for children in the rural areas of Northern New York,” said Senator Ritchie.

*(Attn. photo editors: Senator Ritchie is pictured in the attached photo with Fairley Elementary students, Hannibal Central School District Administrators, University at Buffalo’s administrators and staff and Dr. Annette Maggi)*