



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Helping Seniors Enjoy Healthier Lives

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE | October 5, 2018

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Every fall, I am fortunate enough to host a series of health and wellness fairs for our region's senior population. These fairs feature local health-based businesses, organizations and agencies all offering various wellness checks, health tips and even free flu shots. Our community groups also pitch in, with local students making lunches to give to seniors, free of charge. Local music groups perform—getting many of our seniors up and dancing with friends. What also makes these events so special, are the different agencies that provide

transportation to and from the fairs, to ensure every senior who wants to go can.

In recent years, I have seen the impact these fairs have had on the lives of our seniors, who are looking to not only maintain their health, but also become more active and improve their wellness. They also get the opportunity to get out of their homes, enjoy some social time with their peers and just have fun. That is just as important in our efforts to help our seniors enjoy healthier lives.

The health and wellness of our seniors should be a priority of every single New Yorker who understands what our parents and our grandparents did to help us become the people we are today. As I see my own parents transition into their senior years, it makes me want to ensure that New York State is doing the very best it can to ensure our seniors are living the best life possible.

One of the ways we are doing that is by ensuring proper nutrition. Earlier this year, 2,500 seniors in our region were able to benefit from the “Senior Farmers Market Nutrition” program, which provides free coupons to eligible seniors to be redeemed at local farmers markets. It is a program I was thrilled to help expand in our region.

These coupons encourage our seniors to eat more nutritious, fresh foods and as an added bonus, creates a larger market for our hardworking farmers to sell these farm-fresh foods, helping to boost their bottom lines. Since the program was started four years ago, it has helped connect nearly 10,000 seniors throughout Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties with fresh, healthy foods.

In addition, I was proud to advocate for increased funding in the newest state budget for the New York State Office for the Aging, which helps support our seniors with services that allow them to maximize their ability to age in their community.

Providing our seniors with the resources they need to live healthier and happier lives is important and moving forward, I'll be continuing to advocate to see that our region's aging population has increased opportunities to improve their wellness and enjoy their "golden years."