



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Secures \$300,000 to Expand In-School Dental Health Care

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State Senator Patty Ritchie is announcing she has secured \$300,000 in state funding to help expand the North Country Family Health Center's (NCFHC) school-based dental program, which provides preventative oral health services—including oral health exams and dental cleanings—to more than 500 area students.

Funding secured by Senator Ritchie will allow the program to expand into new schools and serve more students, as well as help it to purchase additional, updated dental equipment. As part of the expanded preventative program, students will receive screenings, cleanings,

sealants and fluoride treatments.

“Quality dental care is critically important to a child’s overall health, however, in rural regions it can be a challenge for many families to access dental services,” said Senator Patty Ritchie.

“When children go without dental health care it can create very serious problems, namely speech difficulties, serious infections and tooth loss. I am pleased to have secured this funding, which will help connect more families throughout our region with the convenient, top-notch dental care they need to live healthy lives.”

The funding will allow the NCFHC to purchase six school-based dental units—four portable units and two permanent units—and hire a new licensed dental hygienist to help provide preventative care and support current staff.

On Monday, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held at Lyme Central to mark the expansion of the NCFHC’s school-based dental program into the school district.

“We are thrilled to be able to offer preventative dental services to students at Lyme Central. It is rewarding to know that we are able to provide care to students right where they are – in school,” states Joey Marie Horton, NCFHC Chief Executive Officer.

“Our goal is to make receiving services convenient and easy for the parents and a positive experience for the students. When children receive services in school, parents do not have to take time off work, and there are no out of pocket costs for parents when their son or daughter is treated at the school-based clinics. Our school-based dental staff work in collaboration with a student’s primary dentist too if other services are necessary.”

In addition to the Lyme Central School District, the program will also be expanding into the ACES Program at Jefferson-Lewis BOCES. Two school districts—Watertown City School District and South Jefferson Central School District—will receive new, permanent units to replace outdated and broken dental equipment.

In addition, portable units, which can be moved from school to school, will also be placed in two operational sites that currently have to share equipment or have outdated equipment, Clarke Middle School-High School in the South Jefferson School District and in the Alexandria Central School District—allowing more students to be seen.

Senator Ritchie's securing of funds builds on her past efforts to improve dental care for children in the region she represents. Last year, she delivered \$250,000 to ConnexCare, formerly known as Northern Oswego County Health Services, to establish a new dental clinic and connect more people—especially children—across the region with easier access to dental health care services.