

OPINION

STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA, R-BIG FLATS

Tick here, tick there, ticks everywhere

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that New York State has the third highest number of confirmed cases of Lyme disease in the United States. It's a public health concern that has become increasingly urgent over the last decade.

There was a time when Lyme disease was considered mostly a "downstate" concern. No longer. Over the past several years, in fact, it has been a rapidly growing public health challenge throughout upstate New York and has drawn increasingly heightened warnings from Southern Tier and Finger Lakes public health officials.

Many health professionals continue to urge caution. The most recent statistics from the state Department of Health (DOH) reaffirm that cases of Lyme disease across area counties shot up in the five years between 2011 and 2016. In Chemung County, for example, the rate of diagnoses rose from just under eight cases per 100,000 residents to 108.

According to the deputy director of the state Health Department's Vector Borne Disease Unit, "The one thing we keep coming back to year after year after year is that no matter where you live in New York State, you need to be vigilant and protect yourself from tick exposure. Regardless of the county you're in, if you're bitten by one tick, it could cause disease."

Lyme is a debilitating disease. If you enjoy the outdoors, even if that means doing yard work or gardening, take it seriously. Those afflicted by Lyme disease can endure years of frustration, to say the least, seeking effective diagnosis and treatment.

In 2013, the Senate established a Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases, on which I continue to serve as a member. The task force continually reviews research, consults with experts, conducts public hearings and works to develop legislation and other recommendations that we hope will become part of a New York State Action Plan on Lyme and Tick-borne Diseases (TBDs). That's our overriding goal: to put in place a statewide plan that will serve as a comprehensive roadmap for improving research, education, diagnosis and treatment.

Last week, for example, we approved several pieces of important legislation to significantly increase reporting and enhance critical research, education and awareness initiatives. One measure would require the state Department of Financial Services to examine the current scope of health insurance coverage for Lyme and tick-borne diseases in New York, and initiatives in other states, and issue a report on alternatives for enhancing coverage in New York State.

ANOTHER VIEW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thank you for Stamp Out Hunger food drive

To the Editor, On behalf of the food pantries in the area and the clients we serve, thank you to the postal workers and those who contributed food for your participation in the recent "Stamp Out Hunger" food drive.

The amount of food collected was incredible and will go a long way in helping us serve the food insecure folks who come to us for assistance. In these days of higher food and gas prices, more and more people are turning to pantries for help. Our statistics show that we are making a difference in the lives of seniors, adults, and children in the area.

We can continue to do this only with the help of the community. We often think of giving around the holidays but the need is year around. Donations are especially

helpful at this time of year in advance of the summer months when many children who depend on school lunches will not have them available. Thank you to all those who left food out for your letter carriers. We are most grateful for your continuing support.

Sincerely,
Jean K. Krebs
Corning Community Food Pantry

Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive a success

To the Editor, I'm writing on behalf of the Painted Post Food Pantry to express our appreciation for the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive May 12th. Thanks to the efforts of our local USPS Letter Carriers, and our friends and neighbors who donated, we collected 1651 pounds of food for the needy in our community.

The variety of canned and dry goods collected help to fulfill our mission to provide nutritious food for those in need, thereby enhancing their quality of life and improving their health and well-being. Thanks also to Wegmans and the Village Mini-mart for providing snacks for the volunteers who helped at the Pantry.

For those in need of food our Pantry is open weekdays from 9AM - Noon. Please call 962-1455 to schedule your visit. The support of our Letter Carriers and the community is greatly appreciated. Thank you to all.
Phyllis Draper
Public Relations, Grant Co-Coordinator
Painted Post Food Pantry, Inc.

Students sent powerful message

To the Editor: In his recent letter, Mr. Savino stated he wants to prevent students from being used as political pawns. He related that to students protesting school massacres. For me, this student activism is about the right to live and that should outweigh other concerns. They sent a powerful message, that reverberated around the nation, asking that laws be enacted to protect them. Through their activism, they had a lesson in civic responsibility in a participatory democracy when just voting may not be enough. These youths are on the frontlines of our homeland security. They are facing

immense problems often with insufficient guidance. If you listen to them, they are by no means ignorant. They understand the possibility of social upheaval when they hear of climate change, never-ending war, and the threat of nuclear annihilation. I am amazed by our young people's ability to cope and by how many remain positive and resilient despite their many battle scars from bullying, peer pressure, abuse, exposure to lies, and the lack of science-based sex education.

They know about Lyme disease, student loan debt, racism, fentanyl, heroin, poverty, hunger, lack of medical access, deceitful compelling ads, and injurious products. They know about living in a digital world where people are too busy, too tense, and perhaps lonelier than ever. To cope with all this they are learning survival skills like protesting at rallies so they don't get picked off. The credentials Mr. Savino spoke of will come later. Students have never been hit with a longer list of fears accompanied by so little help in dealing with them. Too often our children resort to TV, movies or social media for answers when superior forms of education are unavailable. Since they are more socially aware and maturing faster than ever, we may need to change some of our definitions of childhood. Sometimes I even wonder: If we lower the voting age, would we create a safer world?
Karen Biesanz
Corning

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