

INSIDE INSIGHTS

The Monthly Newsletter of the Sullivan County Manager's Office

Winter 2019

Taking Sullivan to the next level

County is in full bloom

to benefit everyone

A diversified economy is a strong economy

A representative sample of the slides displayed at the 2019 State of the County Address

Sullivan County Manager Josh Potosek joined Legislature Chairman Luis Alvarez on January 24 for the annual State of the County Address to not only discuss the accomplishments of 2018 but predict that 2019 will be one of the most significant years in County history.

"Utilizing new sales and room tax revenues and building upon the economic growth we've seen of late, Sullivan County is embarking on a new era of progress — not just thanks to the coming opening of the Kartrite Indoor Water Park and the 50th anniversary of Woodstock, but with County government initiatives like broadband for all, more public transportation options, and new business parks planned in Liberty and Monticello," said Potosek.

To view the video and read the full text of the Address, visit sullivanny.us/departments/legislature/soc

In This Issue

- Safe from harm: inside our Epidemiology Dept.
- New life for Old Route 17
- Meet the new Assistant County Manager
- Do we speak your language?



The crew of Sullivan County Public Health's Epidemiology Department includes, from the left, Public Health Educator Jill Hubert-Simon, Community Health Nurse Lynne Wilcox, RN, Supervising Community Health Nurse Beth Gilmore, RN, Community Health Nurse Amanda Wolfe, RN, Public Health Nurse Jenna Knox, RN, Public Health Program Coordinator Wendy Salonich, Account Clerk/Database Michelle France, and Public Health Nurse GianPaola Santini, RN.

Departmental Spotlight: Public Health Services' Epidemiology Department

What bugs you bugs them more

"When you don't hear from us, that's good news."

That's as simple as Public Health Director Nancy McGraw can put it. And it is indeed accurate, for when Sullivan County Public Health Services' Epidemiology Department springs into view, a dangerous disease is on the prowl.

Then again, the staff of Epidemiology (or Epi, for short) is a potent force themselves, armed with medicines, vaccines, technologically advanced equipment, and the science to use them all.

"We deal with the incidence and control of diseases specific to infectious, non-infectious, terrorism and environmental exposures," explains Beth Gilmore, Epi's Supervising Community Health Nurse. "We also do investigations to control possible outbreaks, and we appropriately treat anyone exposed."

It all starts with a call from a doctor or a hospital — something along the lines of "We have a potential case of measles" or "A patient came in with a bite wound from a possibly rabid animal."

"We work very closely with our community healthcare providers," notes Beth. "We request physicians send us 'suspect forms' [a clinical diagnosis ... or even just an inkling] as a heads-up."

The Epi team gets to work on determining if the symptoms as described indicate a probability of a particular infectious disease, often recommending to the healthcare providers which laboratories can quickly test blood and other fluids. In the case of rabies, a potentially rabid animal will be euthanized by a veterinarian and sent to the NYS Department of Health's testing lab directly after authorization by Public Health.

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What does Epidemiology do? Plenty

Epidemiology. It's a big word. And its folks take on big tasks. For example:

- **Control Program:** monthly tuberculosis clinics
- **Childhood Lead Poisoning & Prevention Program:** primarily case management of children who have been reported to have elevated lead blood levels
- **Communicable Disease Program:** diseases that can be infectious, non-infectious, environmental, terrorism-related
- **Sexually Transmitted Infection Program**
- **Immunization Program:** providing vaccines for children and adults, with monthly clinics should the need arise
- **Influenza vaccinations:** several community clinics are scheduled during influenza season
- **Rabies (and other zoonotic diseases) Surveillance & Control Program:** 4 times a year free animal rabies vaccination clinics (and as needed if positive rabies in an animal has been identified)
- **Health Emergency Preparedness Program:** prepares for mass vaccination/ medication and Points of Distribution (PODS)
- **HIV testing:** as scheduled
- **Health Education:** community education on all programs, i.e., ticks, STDs, lead, immunizations, communicable diseases, etc.

Tackling opioid abuse head-on

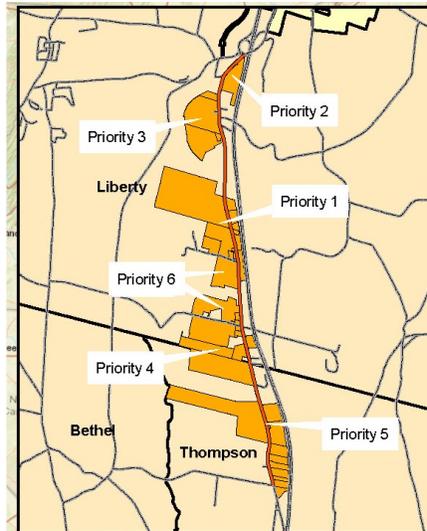
Sullivan County is not immune to the opioid abuse crisis sweeping the nation. The number of overdoses and even deaths associated with opioid addiction is staggering.

“That’s why, in 2016, with the support of the Legislature, I created the Opioid Epidemic Task Force,” says County Manager Josh Potosek. “We cannot stand by while our citizens succumb to lethal drugs like heroin and fentanyl.”

The Task Force meets quarterly and consists of government officials, healthcare leaders, law enforcement officers, physicians, mental health experts, and others interested in squarely facing this crisis.

Topics include prescription abuse, access to treatment, police-assisted recovery, the distribution of lifesaving medication like Narcan, and the mapping of overdose locations so as to better pinpoint communities at risk.

The next meeting will be held on April 11 at 1:30 p.m. in the Government Center in Monticello and is open to the public.



Shovel-ready is future-ready

In collaboration with the Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development, the County has completed a study of a portion of Old Route 17 that warehouses, light industry, office parks and small-to-medium businesses would find attractive.

“We’ve committed \$300,000 to an effort to locate and develop shovel-ready sites close to Route 17, our major highway, and in areas already used to such businesses and the associated traffic,” explains County Manager Josh Potosek.

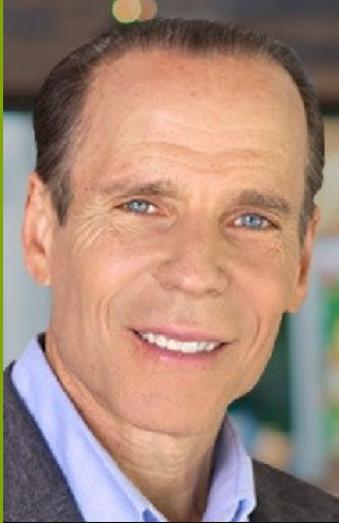
The study, prepared by Delaware Engineering, identified six potential sites along Old 17 in the towns of Liberty and Thompson, between Harris and Ferndale. They are not far from existing sewer and water services, are in proximity to Route 17’s exits 101 and 102, and are zoned for such development.

The Partnership recently approached the Industrial Development Agency for further funding and the creation of a Local Development Corporation that could negotiate purchases with the current owners of the identified parcels. The IDA is considering that proposal and plans to participate, says Board Chairman Ira Steingart.

“Work continues moving forward,” confirms Partnership President Marc Baez, who agrees with the County Manager that shovel-ready sites are critical to attracting new businesses to Sullivan County.

The most attractive sites must have water and sewer ready to go, access to sufficient transportation arteries, and a fully completed Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS), which allows companies to focus on getting just the Federal, State and Town permits specific to their particular operations.

“The overall affordability in the Sullivan County market,” says the study, “will provide economic development officials an advantage as they compete with adjacent counties in closer proximity to the Interstate 87 corridor and New York City, as well as other locations in the Northeast.”



Dr. Joel Fuhrman

Take charge of your health

Back by popular request, Dr. Joel Fuhrman will present “Fast Food Genocide: How Processed Food Is Killing Us and What We Can Do About It” on Monday, April 22 at 6 p.m. at the Bethel Woods Event Gallery.

The free seminar is being presented by our partner, Sullivan 180, a nonprofit focused on improving the health of the entire County.

Healthy refreshments will be served, so pre-registration is requested at bit.ly/2W286tw or by calling 845-295-2680. Friends and family are welcome!

Dr. Fuhrman is a family physician, nutritional researcher and best-selling author who has appeared on “Dr. Oz,” “Good Morning America” and PBS.

Meet Stephanie Brown, Assistant Co. Manager

You’ll most often find Stephanie Brown working on compliance issues, ensuring Sullivan County is adhering to an exhausting myriad of rules, regulations, policies & procedures, internally and from State, Federal and nonprofit agencies.

But her job encompasses more than that, as illustrated by her title: Assistant County Manager.

“That gives me the ability to interact with more people on higher-level projects and issues, with more authority to act on behalf of the County Manager,” she explains. “I’m grateful to have this opportunity to support our County Legislature, workforce, and residents and to work with such a dedicated, forward-thinking leadership team.”

Contrary to popular rumor, Stephanie is not the Deputy County Manager. Her position, in fact, is a new one, created in the 2019 County Budget process.

“Regulations are evolving, and we’re growing,” says Stephanie. “Staying on top of compliance can be like three full-time jobs, but if we don’t, we risk fines, giving grant money back, loss of funding and other penalties that would restrict us from providing the necessary services to our residents.”

In fact, the Office of the Medicaid Inspector General requires a compliance program, and it is in that arena where Stephanie has honed her skills.

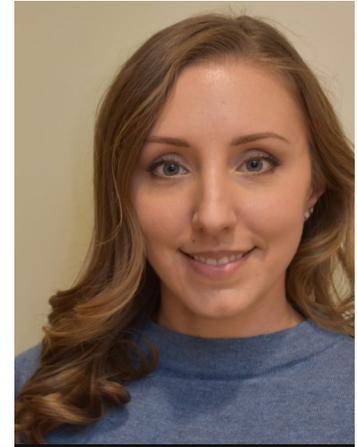
“I spent three-and-a-half years working on compliance-related issues and activities at Public Health Services,” she relates. “And compliance permeated every aspect of my work as Nursing Supervisor at the Center for Discovery.”

You read that right — Stephanie is also a Registered Nurse, well-versed in healthcare, and possesses a Master’s in Nursing and a Master’s in Business.

“I love to learn, and I wanted to have as many possibilities open to me as possible, especially as a single parent,” she confides. “Although the trajectory of my nursing career shifted from direct care toward leadership and management, I discovered that influencing policy changes translates to helping even more people.”

A County native, Stephanie lives in Youngsville with her daughters Callie, 14, and Macie, 11. She has a 19-year-old son, Tim, in college.

“I moved away from the area for a bit but returned to raise my family here. I now have a beautiful home on the property I came home to as a baby,” she notes. “And my first nursing job was in the hospital where I was born.”



Stephanie Brown

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Epidemiology: on the front lines

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With the assent of the family's physician, Epi then contacts the exposed/ill individual or family to begin investigating the symptoms and/or potential exposure sources directly.

"We want to know who has had contact with this person, where this person has been and when their symptoms began," Beth explains. "Then we collaborate with the NYS Department of Health and discuss appropriate actions to take as required."

Whatever healthcare facility provides the recommended treatment will be notified by the Epi team, and the Public Health Director has the authority to compel that person or family to seek treatment or even be quarantined, should their illness be considered a public health risk. Epi nurses monitor closely, at times up to a year for persistent issues like tuberculosis.

"Sometimes we make home visits, though we usually monitor their progress via telephone calls," Beth says. "We do that as long as we need to, until the person is healed and non-communicable [no longer contagious] — that's the key word."

If the infected person is a child, Epi will work with the school they attend, and the school is provided education to avoid spread of an infectious disease.

"Education is key," notes Beth, who works closely with Public Health Educator Jill Hubert-Simon to teach about lice, ticks, hand-washing, etc.

That knowledge can be life-saving for diseases where there are no vaccines readily available.

"I remember H1N1 ['swine flu'] in 2009," Beth recalls. "It became evident that there was a pandemic, and it took a few months to have the vaccine made, which the State supplied.

"That was a very, very busy time for this office," she adds. "Between October 2009 and March 2010, we vaccinated almost 6,000 people and held 49 clinics."

Exhausting as it can be, Beth loves what she does. "Every day is different," says this nurse of 40 years. "As a nurse, I don't only concentrate on the patient. You have to incorporate the whole family, the whole community, and that's where my interest lies."

She also enjoys the talented crew with whom she works.

"It's all collaborative," Beth affirms. "My staff does nothing but epidemiology: pertussis, measles, salmonella, rabies, flu, STDs, even plans for Ebola and Zika viruses. We are on call after-hours and weekends — someone's always available, 24/7."

"They work very well as a team," confirms Nancy. "They are keenly aware of community health issues that could impact the public. They are the core of our emergency planning. They also work very hard to promote health and wellness, and they are always willing to take on new challenges.

"Believe me," Nancy assures, "it is never dull in Epi!"

Renaissance is changing course

Our partners, Sullivan Renaissance and Sullivan 180, share the County's interest in better health, and they're stepping up their game.

The Center for Discovery's Michael Ritchie Big Barn in Hurleyville will host two important public meetings during Renaissance's annual conference.



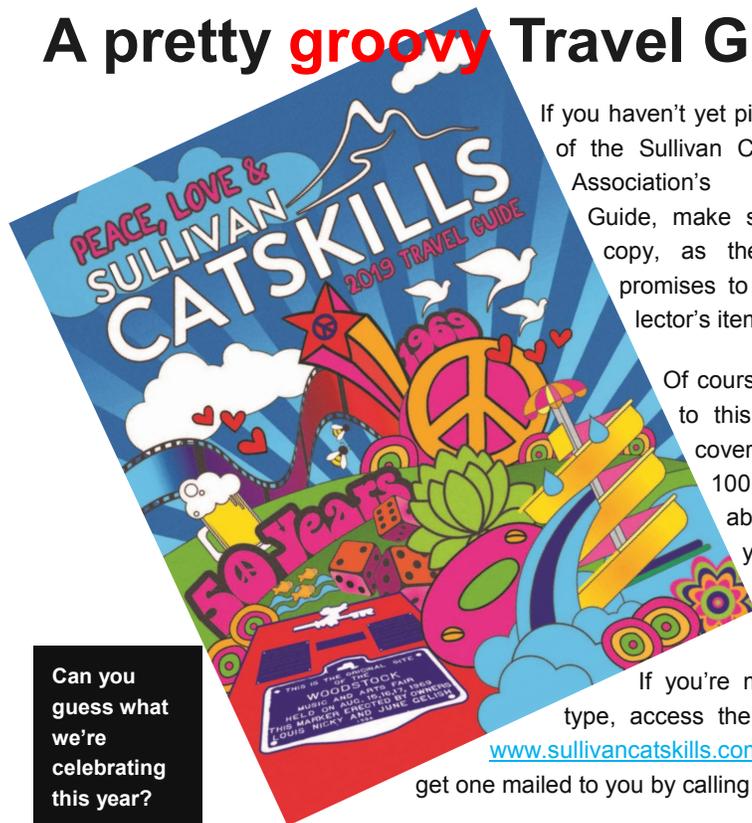
On Friday, May 17 at 5:30 p.m., sociologist Ben Winchester will give a brief TED-style talk and moderate a discussion about why young professionals are seeking and finding opportunity here in the County. Some of the panelists will, in fact, fit that description.

On Saturday, May 18, at 10 a.m., Ben will return with a new panel of key policymakers to talk about new initiatives and projects to "Change the Course" of the County.

After lunch, the conference will move to downtown Hurleyville for an afternoon of workshops and activities focused on health, community and fun.

[www.sullivanrenaissance.org/
events-seminars](http://www.sullivanrenaissance.org/events-seminars)

A pretty groovy Travel Guide



Can you guess what we're celebrating this year?

If you haven't yet picked up a copy of the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association's 2019 Travel Guide, make sure to grab a copy, as the cover alone promises to make it a collector's item.

Of course, there's more to this book than its cover, with close to 100 pages of just about everything you can do in our corner of the Catskills.

If you're more the digital type, access the new Guide at www.sullivancatskills.com/brochures. Or get one mailed to you by calling 845-747-4449.

Stephanie...

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While she misses the direct care she once provided to patients, especially the young and vulnerable, Stephanie is thrilled to be part of the management team of the County.

"I truly believe in our County, and being a native, I have a good understanding of our strengths and our needs," she says. "We are going to continue to see many great things here, and I am extremely excited to be a part of that forward momentum."

"Stephanie is an experienced, motivated professional who impressed me when she was a Public Health Nurse, Quality Improvement Coordinator and HIPAA Privacy Designee at Public Health Services, and also when she became the Director of our Office for the Aging," says Josh Potosek, the County Manager. "I welcome her to this new, much-needed role."



More info on this new venture can be found at www.catskillsfoodhub.org.

The future is finally in sight

Work on a project to aid agriculture in Sullivan County began more than a decade ago, and come April 12, the literal fruits of that effort will manifest. That Friday, the ribbon will be cut on the Catskills Food Hub in Liberty, a 5,000-square-foot aggregation and distribution center for local and regional products including fresh produce, packaged meat and dairy products, and shelf-stable pantry items. Through an online sales platform, the Hub will provide a streamlined way for producers to sell their items to a larger customer base, integrated with a professional transportation option.

Did you know?

Sullivan County government employs nearly 50 people who can speak languages other than English — and can translate.

Not surprisingly, our largest group of translators are fluent in Spanish, but we also have the ability to translate Polish, Creole, Portuguese, Haitian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Slovak & Czech, and Hungarian. We even have an employee who does American Sign Language!