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FOR RELEASE on April 1, 2013

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National Public Health Week, April 1-7, Highlights Range of Public Health

Brewster, NY— Last week fourth graders lined up at Kent Elementary School for a free, school-based dental screening, while more than 150 food operators gathered to learn more about safe food handling practices. These are just two examples of public health in action—a fitting introduction to National Public Health Week, which runs from April 1 through April 7.

Since its inception in 1995, National Public Health Week has focused on key issues for improving the public's health, while also recognizing past contributions of public health workers. Chronic disease prevention stands in the forefront of public health today and dental disease is the number-one chronic disease among children. That's the rationale behind the Putnam County Department of Health's Dental Health Screening Initiative. In collaboration with local dentists, free dental screenings are offered in public schools for fourth grade elementary school children.

One traditional pillar of public health is the prevention of food-borne illnesses. Restaurant inspectors from the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH) not only provide ongoing training in safe food handling practices, but last year alone the staff checked 335 food establishments in the county to prevent disease and safeguard the public. Immunization activities are another public health

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mainstay and during this year's flu season, nearly 5,000 influenza vaccines were administered by PCDOH nursing staff.

The scope of duties performed by public health workers surprises many. In addition to restaurant inspectors and nurses, staff at the Putnam County Department of Health includes an epidemiologist and public health physician, program planners and health educators, sanitarians, engineers, and nutritionists, all of whom work to ensure the health and well-being of residents. When effective, their work often goes unnoticed. For a complete listing of free public health services, from immunizations to water sanitation regulation, visit www.putnamcountyny.com.

The Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of the nearly 100,000 Putnam County residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our website at www.putnamcountyny.com; or our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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Caption for enclosed JPEG photo:

Patterson dentist Roderick MacRae, DDS, examines a fourth-grader during a free dental screening. The screening is part of the Putnam County Department of Health's Dental Health Initiative, a joint collaboration among local area dentists, school districts and the health department, to stem the number-one chronic childhood illness—dental disease.