



## COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS



### *Ditch the Screen, Get Outside, and Plan Your Way to Better Health*

You can't turn on the news or open a paper today without seeing stories about the obesity epidemic, sugar addiction, the salt and soda overload in our diets, or our sedentary lifestyles.

Today's world is quite a bit different than when I was growing up. There is candy in the checkout aisles of linen stores; there are fast-food restaurants in every town. Combine this with the billions of dollars the food industry spends on sophisticated advertising. On top of all this, our lives are so busy there is little time left for physical activity. Our digital screens and motorized vehicles have us leading sedentary lives from dawn to dusk.

This detrimental environment is all the more dismal with new scientific evidence that has begun to surface showing sugar may indeed exert a strong and unhealthy appeal. While it doesn't come close to the addictive power of nicotine or other drugs, research dating back nearly a decade shows neurochemical changes in the brain not unlike those that occur with addictive drugs.

Given this "perfect storm" of more input and less output, the Putnam County Department of Health recently launched two initiatives to shake up what social scientists call our "social norms." The first focuses on the idea that good-for-you, healthy food can also be delicious and tasty. This means you should be able go out to eat and enjoy a wonderful, satisfying meal without having to worry about adding inches to your waistline.

Last year we launched Eat Smart Restaurant Week with 35 participating Putnam County eateries that were eager to work with us to showcase this concept. This year's Eat Smart Restaurant Week returns again for another two-week stretch, from Sept. 27 to Oct. 11. After last year's successful launch, nearly all restaurants are returning and a few new local popular spots are joining. It is amazing what you can do with fresh, local ingredients, herbs and other specially selected condiments.

The second initiative tackles the other side of the calorie equation, exercise. The Health Department's Run 4 Your Life event, set for Sept. 27, is not intended as a scare tactic, despite its name. Its underlying motto is "Walk, run, have fun." The idea is to get out in some fresh air, connect with family and friends, and make activity more a part of your daily routine. Get up and get moving.

While Run 4 Your Life is one day a year, overall consistency is key. Choosing an activity that you enjoy helps bolster your motivation and commitment. Biking, swimming, skating, dancing, jump roping, soccer, a game of hoops – mix it up, or concentrate on one or two. As little as 30 minutes, three times a week, will have a dramatic impact on life expectancy and quality of life. Truly, run for your life!

If you would like more inspiration or wish to take part in either event, check our website at [putnamcountyny.com/health](http://putnamcountyny.com/health); or visit our Facebook pages at [www.facebook.com/RunWalkPutnam](https://www.facebook.com/RunWalkPutnam) or [www.facebook.com/putnamhealth](https://www.facebook.com/putnamhealth).

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