



## COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS



### **Taking On Chronic Disease and Mental Illness**

Tightening budgets, escalating healthcare costs and a transitioning public health environment have set a challenging stage for public health and healthcare professionals working to improve the health of Putnam County residents. Last month more than 70 providers, leaders and administrators—from nearly 40 community organizations and agencies—sat down to brainstorm and focus on initiatives at the Putnam County Public Health Summit III. Organized by the Putnam County Department of Health with Putnam Hospital Center, the all-day event stimulated discussion about priorities and strategies among organizations and agencies that provide a variety of public health and healthcare services to residents.

Reducing chronic disease and improving mental health services emerged as the two most pressing health issues facing our county. The rising financial toll of these problems has the potential to bring our healthcare system to its knees; the human burden at times is additionally heart wrenching. Mounting obesity and suicide rates, smoking, sedentary lifestyles, diabetes and substance abuse—all must be addressed.

Advancing scientific discoveries, therapies and technologies can provide some relief, but they alone are not enough. Tailored programs and policies focusing on prevention, education and healthy lifestyle promotion are needed. Resources spent in this way actually save money in the long run as suggested by the old adage, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

The summit proceedings will help formulate the Community Health Improvement Plan, known in public health lingo as the “CHIP.” You may be hearing more about this plan as it is developed, and health department staff and community partners continue to collect input from both individuals and organizations. In November it will be submitted to New York State Department of Health as required. From there, we at the Health Department will begin implementation of the CHIP to improve the health and lives of our residents.

Putnam County residents who have not yet done so and still wish to provide their opinion about our community strengths and areas for improvement are asked to visit the Putnam County website where the survey is still accessible at [www.putnamcountyny.com](http://www.putnamcountyny.com) . It will run until July 31. (The direct link is [www.putnamcountyny.com/lhp/surveyp](http://www.putnamcountyny.com/lhp/surveyp) )

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