

Health Department and PHC Host Public Health Summit IX

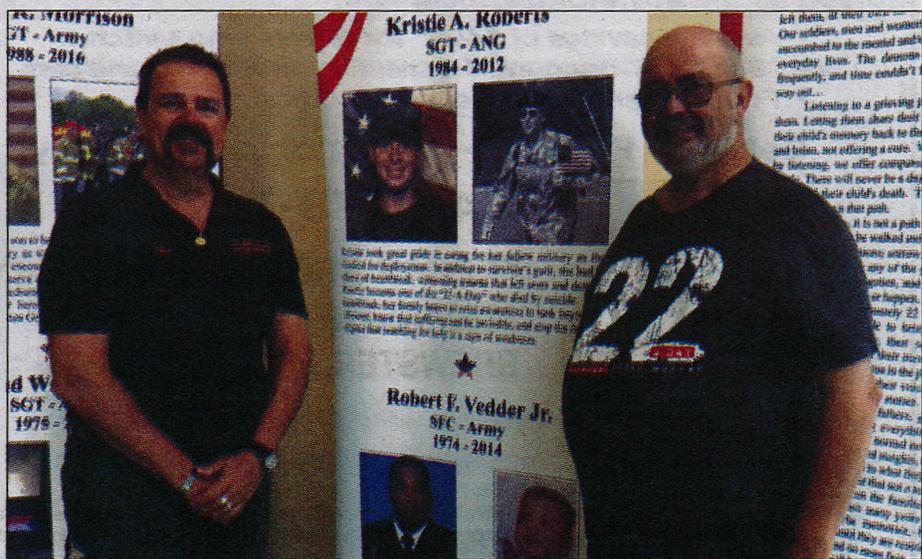


PROVIDED PHOTOS

Taking on the challenge of preventing chronic diseases in Putnam County are Public Health Summit participants Maureen Kenny, left, director of POW'R Against Tobacco, American Lung Association, and Carissa Mazzeo, manager of Reality Check at POW'R. Erin Pascaretti, the health department's epidemiologist and acting supervisor of health education, is in the center.



Putnam Hospital Center President Peter Kelly, center, Health Commissioner Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, right, and Deputy Commissioner Joseph DeMarzo, of the Putnam County Department of Social Services and Mental Health, and the Youth Bureau were all on hand for the Summit.



Karl Rohde, right, director of the Veterans Service Agency, and John Bourges, program coordinator for the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer, Vet2Vet program of the Mental Health Association in Putnam County, spoke about the mental health issues affecting returning veterans.

More than 80 representatives from 44 agencies gathered together at Putnam Hospital Center for Public Health Summit IX on June 19. The goal was to review data and brainstorm plans for improving community health. While community health data may not vary much year to year, community partners convene annually to evaluate community needs and plan for the future.

Putnam Hospital Center President Peter Kelly and Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, Health Commissioner for Putnam County, welcomed attendees, each thanking them for their commitment to the community. "The summit is a time to reflect, plan and engage partners," said Dr. Nesheiwat, noting also that by partnering with our community organizations we are able to better recognize the shifting needs of our community and address these changes through both innovative and constructive ideas.

Michael Piazza, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Social Services, and the Youth Bureau, was also among the introductory speakers, describing the inspiring legacy of Judge Reitz, who passed away suddenly the previous week, leaving widespread shock and sadness among community members. He reminded attendees that like Judge Reitz, they too do work that enhances life in Putnam County and that their work has an even greater impact than they may ever know.

County Executive MaryEllen Odell is a longtime supporter of the summit. "We are one of the healthiest counties in New York State, and our county agencies and community groups work tirelessly to ensure this," she said at the recent State of the County Address. "I am always particularly proud of the way the different sectors in Putnam maintain alliances and collaborate. In this way, we all are able to truly stay informed about resources and identify the gaps that need to be filled."

Mental health received particular attention at this year's summit. On display prior to its Putnam County viewing later that evening, was The New York Warrior Promise Wall, a photographic memorial honoring those New Yorkers who have served and died by suicide as a result of PTSD. At the conclusion of the summit, all three breakout groups recounted conversations on the intersection of mental health and community health, declaring that mental health is no longer an isolated field apart from physical well-being. In recent years, public health professionals have been focusing on comprehensive health promotion to address the overlap between mental health and physical illness.

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