

Steuben County Newsletter

Winter 2022/2023



*****Please Distribute to All Interested Board Members and the Public*****

FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK....

After a multi-year break due to COVID and resulting recovery, we are pleased to again present the quarterly County newsletter.

This simple tool is meant to provide our municipal partners, stakeholders, and the public with important updates on County services that are hopefully of interest.

In this edition, you will find updates and resources from our Office for the Aging, Veterans' Services, and our Workers Compensation Plan, among others.

As always, please contact County staff or Legislators with questions/concerns. Thank you all very much and Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,

Scott VanEtten
Chairman
Steuben County Legislature

Office for the Aging

Got friends? The Steuben County Office for the Aging is focused on the negative impact of loneliness and social isolation in alignment with strategies being implemented by the New York State Office for the Aging. Would it surprise you to know that chronic loneliness can have the same effect on overall health as smoking 15 cigarettes per day? This is motivation enough for us to explore programming that can help.

In recent months, we delivered about 68 animatronic pets to older adults in Steuben County who identified themselves as socially isolated and lonely. Check out joyforall.com to learn more!

For more information about our programs, call OFA at 607-664-2298.

Real Property Tax

Legislation was passed and signed by Governor Hochul in August that allows taxing entities to adopt the senior citizen exemption allowed under Real Property Tax Law §467 with a higher maximum income limit for the 50% exemption than the current maximum of \$29,000. The new maximum is

\$50,000. This legislation also applies to the disabled property owner exemption that is allowed under RPTL §459-c. If the taxing entity has already adopted the senior citizen exemption and wishes to adopt a higher income limit; in the case of towns and cities, a local law to amend the income limits must be passed prior to March 1, 2023 in order for the new limits to apply to the 2023 assessments. The same would apply to the disabled property owner exemption. School districts would need to adopt a resolution to change the income limits applicable to school taxes. This change is not a requirement, but an option that taxing entities may elect to utilize. You may contact the Real Property Tax Office at 607-664-2373 with questions or additional information can also be found on the NYS ORPTS website using one or both of the following links:

www.tax.ny.gov/research/property/asess/manuals/vol4/pt1/index.htm

www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/exemption/seniorexempt.htm

Steuben County Workers Compensation Plan

NYS Volunteer Firefighters Cancer Benefit

In 2019, New York State signed into law the Volunteer Firefighter Cancer Benefit Program, giving eligible volunteer firefighters enhanced cancer disability insurance coverage provided by their department, district, or company.

As our volunteer firefighters are extremely important to all communities across Steuben County and with many departments struggling with budgets constraints and membership, the Steuben County Legislature found a way to help.

At the July 2022 Steuben County Administration Committee meeting, the Committee unanimously approved funding to provide the NYS Volunteer Firefighter Cancer Benefit Program to all eligible fire department members in the Steuben County Worker's Compensation Plan. This benefit will be provided at NO COST to the departments, districts or companies, eligible volunteers, freeing up funding that can be used for other items, such as turnout gear, trainings, etc.

As the Steuben County Workers Compensation Plan continues to see financial growth and reduction of claims, we are always looking for ways to provide additional benefits to our municipal partners.

Veterans' Service Agency

Do you have questions about your Military Benefits (disability, education, healthcare...)? Need Help Navigating the Veterans Administration or getting military records? Meet your Steuben County Veterans Service Officer at:

Hornell Senior Center, Broadway Mall
1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month from 1-4PM.

The Wayland Free Library
1st Wednesday of Every month from 11AM-1PM

For appointments at other times in the Bath office or to arrange something in your community call the Steuben County Veterans service Agency.

For more Information call: Steuben County Veterans' Service Agency at 607-664-2527/2528/2198

Public Health

Public Health currently has three Imminent Threat to Public Health (ITPH) declarations that we are actively engaged in. It is unprecedented in NYS to have three concurrent ITPH in active status.

COVID-19:

- COVID-19 remains at a medium level of Community transmission in Steuben County. We consistently stand up two clinics per month specifically for COVID vaccines, primary series and boosters. These clinics are held in the County Office Building Public Health Department by appointment. The new bivalent booster, designed to combat the Omicron variants as well as the original strain of COVID, has replaced the previous monovalent boosters and are readily available. Now everyone age 5 and older are eligible to receive a booster dose.
- Under a school specific COVID grant, portable air filtration systems have been purchased and delivered to school districts that requested them. Studies have indicated that the air filters increase the rate of air exchange within a classroom helping to mitigate potential for transmission of COVID-19.

Monkeypox:

- There have been no cases of monkeypox in Steuben County. Public Health has Jynneos, the monkeypox vaccine, available for residents. We stood up one monkeypox specific clinic for county residents and only four individuals participated. The vaccine will continue to be offered for those interested and at risk.
- Multiple messaging and education has been released by Public Health on various social mediums in an effort to keep the public aware and informed.

Polio:

- Though polio has been detected in multiple counties wastewater systems, mostly downstate, there remains only one diagnosed case of paralytic polio. That one case is in Rockland County. In Steuben County, we are advocating for polio surveillance within our existing wastewater sampling, however, CDC laboratories remain at capacity for testing of these samples. We stand ready with vaccine for anyone who is either under vaccinated or unvaccinated.

Other:

- In an effort to increase the rate of general immunizations within the County, we have changed our structure and now offer routine immunizations on a daily basis, M-F, by appointment. Previously, we held two immunization clinics per month but we are pleased to report we have already seen an increase in the number of immunizations administered since we made the changeover a month ago. These clinics are also held in our Public Health department in the county office building.
- Ebola is surfacing again with an outbreak in Uganda. There have been 141 confirmed cases and 55 deaths. At this time, cases are confined to Uganda with no cases reported outside of the country. Persons traveling to the United States by air from Uganda will be redirected to five U.S. airports including JFK in New York City. A health screening of each traveler will be done prior to exiting Uganda and upon arrival at JFK.