

Healthcare

2/26/18-IT LOOKS LIKE THE FLU SEASON IS WINDING DOWN LOCALLY. JUST WEEKS AGO AREA HOSPITALS PUT STRICT VISITATION RULES IN PLACE IN ORDER TO CONTROL THE SPREAD OF THE FLU TO VULNERABLE PATIENTS. AT THAT TIME LOCAL MEDICAL WORKERS WERE TREATING DOZENS OF CASES A DAY. BUT OFFICIALS SAY THE STREAM OF PATIENTS TESTING POSITIVE FOR THE FLU HAS SLOWED DOWN TO A TRICKLE. THEY'RE HOPEFUL THE WORST IS OVER, BUT CAUTION THAT FLU SEASON STRETCHES WELL INTO THE SPRING AND RESIDENTS SHOULD CONTINUE TAKING PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT INFECTION.

2/23/18-HUNDREDS OF CHILDREN IN ONEIDA COUNTY ARE SUFFERING FROM LEAD POISONING, AND THE STATE COULD BE POISED TO START PROVIDING EXTRA FUNDS TO HELP SOLVE THE PROBLEM. THE WATER CRISIS IN FLINT, MICHIGAN HAS HELPED BRING NEW ATTENTION TO LEAD CONTAMINATION. BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOOK FAR TO FIND IT HAVING AN IMPACT. THE UTICA ROME AREA HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST LEAD POISONING RATES IN THE NATION. NOW STATE OFFICIALS ARE TALKING ABOUT MAKING EXTRA MONEY AVAILABLE TO FUND MORE TESTING AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS.

2/21/18-THE NUMBER OF SMOKERS IN NEW YORK HAS HIT A RECORD LOW. THAT'S ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, WHICH YESTERDAY SAID ONLY 14.2 PERCENT OF THE STATE'S RESIDENTS ARE PUFFING ON CIGARETTES. THAT COMPARES TO A NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 17.8 PERCENT. AND THE TEEN SMOKING RATE HAS PLUNGED EVEN FURTHER, DOWN TO A HISTORIC LOW OF 4.3 PERCENT. BUT THE NEW FIGURES COULD BE A BIT DECEIVING. THEY DON'T TAKE E-CIGARETTES INTO ACCOUNT, AND THE ELECTRONIC VAPORIZERS HAVE BECOME AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR OPTION FOR BOTH SMOKERS AND THOSE TRYING TO QUIT.

2/14/18-AS THE NUMBER OF FLU CASES IN THE AREA CONTINUES TO MOUNT HOSPITALS AND CLINICS ARE FACING SOME POTENTIAL SHORTAGES OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES. THE BIGGEST ISSUE IS A SHORTAGE OF INTRAVENOUS SALINE BAGS USED TO HELP REHYDRATE PATIENTS. THE PRIMARY FACTORY IS IN PUERTO RICO AND WAS HEAVILY DAMAGED IN HURRICANE MARIA. PROVIDERS ARE ALSO RUNNING SHORT ON HIGH SPEED FLU TESTS. THEY CAN CONFIRM A CASE OF THE FLU IN JUST TEN MINUTES, BUT THE SHORTAGE MEANS RESULTS CAN TAKE UP TO THREE DAYS USING OLDER TECHNOLOGY.

2/9/18-NEW YORK'S BATTLE AGAINST THE FLU REQUIRES EMERGENCY MEASURES. THAT'S ACCORDING TO GOVERNOR CUOMO'S OFFICE, WHICH YESTERDAY AUTHORIZED THE STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO MAKE EMERGENCY FUNDS AVAILABLE TO HELP COUNTIES FIGHT THE DISEASE. THAT INCLUDES PAYING FOR MORE FLU VACCINATIONS THROUGH HEALTH CLINICS. THE LATEST TRACKING FIGURES SHOW YET ANOTHER SPIKE IN THE NUMBER OF INFLUENZA INFECTIONS, WITH CONFIRMED CASES HITTING THE HIGHEST NUMBER SINCE REPORTING BEGAN BACK IN 2004.

2/7/18-ONE MILLION DOLLARS. THAT'S HOW MUCH MONEY MOHAWK VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEMS IS DEDICATING TO A NEW EFFORT TO HELP RELOCATE THE BUSINESSES IN THE FOOTPRINT OF UTICA'S DOWNTOWN

HOSPITAL PROJECT. BUT THE EFFORT IS GETTING A COOL RECEPTION. BUSINESS OWNERS SAY THE FINE PRINT CAPS ANY ASSISTANCE AT 40-THOUSAND DOLLARS, AND THAT DOESN'T COME TO COVERING THEIR COSTS. IF THEY DON'T AGREE TO A BUYOUT THEIR BUSINESSES COULD BE SEIZED BY EMINENT DOMAIN SO THEIR BUILDINGS CAN BE DEMOLISHED.

2/5/18-NEW YORK'S BATTLE AGAINST THE FLU CONTINUES, AND ONEIDA COUNTY IS GROUND ZERO. THE LATEST TRACKING REPORT SHOWS ONEIDA COUNTY IS A HUB OF INFECTIONS, WITH HUNDREDS MORE CONFIRMED INFECTIONS THAN SURROUNDING COUNTIES. THE SPIKE IN FLU CASES HAS LEAD TO VISITOR RESTRICTIONS AT BOTH OF UTICA'S HOSPITALS. SAINT ELIZABETH'S AND SAINT LUKES ARE BOTH BANNING CHILDREN UNDER EIGHTEEN FROM VISITING AS THEY DEAL WITH A WAVE OF PATIENTS SUFFERING FROM FLU AND FLU LIKE SYMPTOMS.

2/5/18-195-THOUSAND DOLLARS. THAT'S HOW MUCH IT COSTS THE AVERAGE SMOKER IN NEW YORK TO LIGHT UP. THE FIGURE COMES FROM A NEW STUDY BY WALLETHUB, WHICH FOUND THE EMPIRE STATE WAS THE MOST EXPENSIVE STATE IN THE NATION FOR SMOKERS. THE NEARLY 200-THOUSAND DOLLAR FIGURE IS BASED ON A PACK A DAY BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 69. BUT IT'S JUST A FRACTION OF THE 2-POINT-3 MILLION DOLLARS THE HABIT ENDS UP COSTING BOTH THE SMOKER AND THE STATE IN HEALTHCARE COSTS FOR CANCER, HEART DISEASE, AND STROKE.

2/2/18-A RECORD NUMBER OF PEOPLE HAVE SIGNED UP FOR COVERAGE ON NEW YORK'S INSURANCE EXCHANGE. OPEN ENROLLMENT UNDER THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT WRAPPED UP ON WEDNESDAY AND OFFICIALS SAY OVER 4-POINT-3 MILLION PEOPLE USED IT TO GET COVERAGE. THE VAST MAJORITY QUALIFIED FOR MEDICAID, WITH OVER THREE MILLION SIGN-UPS. JUST OVER 250-THOUSAND USED THE EXCHANGE TO GET SUBSIDIZED PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE. ALTOGETHER OVER 700-THOUSAND MORE PEOPLE SIGNED UP THIS YEAR OVER LAST.