

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Oneida County Celebrates Screen-Free Week with StoryWalk in Rome and Sherrill

Health Department Events Scheduled April 30 to May 6

In recognition of National Screen-Free Week, the Oneida County Health Department has collaborated with the City of Rome Parks and Recreation Department, City of Sherrill, Sherrill-Kenwood Library, and the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities Initiative to bring StoryWalk® to the Rome and Sherrill communities.

Screen-Free Week highlights the opportunity for the entire family to unplug from digital entertainment and spend more time reading, playing, daydreaming, creating and exploring. This year, Screen-Free Week is observed April 30 to May 6.

“In this day and age of children spending more and more time inside on devices, events like National Screen-Free Week are more important than ever to promoting healthy habits,” said Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. “Our Health Department’s StoryWalk events in Rome and Sherrill are a great way to encourage kids to get off their screens, get outside and be active. They also give families the opportunity to spend some quality time together sharing the joy of reading.”

StoryWalk® is the creation of Anne Ferguson and the Kellogg-Hubbard Library from Montpelier, Vermont and it is described as “an innovative and delightful way for children and adults to enjoy reading and the outdoors at the same time. Laminated pages from a children’s book are attached to wooden posts which are installed along an outdoor path. As you stroll down the trail, you’re directed to the next page in the story.”

The pages of the children’s book will be displayed, in sequence, on wooden stakes. The public is invited to stop by any time during daylight hours from April 30 to May 6 to explore this exciting project. It is also a great opportunity to check out the trail and park, and get some physical activity as a family. Look around to see if you can spot any of the animals mentioned in the book, or hear any sounds of nature! The StoryWalks® will take place at the following locations:

- Rome StoryWalk® featuring *The Gruffalo*: Pinti Field: 200 6th St. Rome, NY;
- Sherrill StoryWalk® featuring *The Listening Walk*: Robertson Park: Wayland St. Sherrill, NY

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Through the *Creating Healthy Schools and Communities* initiative, the Oneida County Health Department will be bringing StoryWalk® to the communities of the Adirondack, Remsen, Holland Patent, Whitesboro, and Utica school districts this summer as well. The *Creating Healthy Schools and Communities* grant is a five-year (2015-2020), public health initiative of the New York State Department of Health with the goal of reducing major risk factors of obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases in 85 high-need school districts and associated communities.

“The Creating Healthy Schools and Communities initiative focuses on providing safe opportunities for community members to be physically active,” said Oneida County Director of Health Phyllis Ellis. “Opportunities such as this are crucial to combating obesity and building a healthier community.”

“We hope the community will enjoy the trail and the story, and perhaps spend a little less time in front of a screen this week while being physically active,” said *Creating Healthy Schools and Communities* Community Coordinator Sarah Eggan.

Please contact the Oneida County Health Department for more information at 315-798-5483.
