



ONEIDA COUNTY  
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

ANTHONY J. PICENTE, JR.  
County Executive  
ce@ocgov.net

For Immediate Release  
Contact: Phil Vanno 315-723-5465 or pvanno@ocgov.net

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## **Oneida County Urges Kids and Families to Unplug During Screen-Free Week**

*Outdoor Events Scheduled in Rome, Sherrill and Boonville*

In celebration of National Screen-Free Week, the Oneida County Health Department is partnering with several local communities to sponsor outdoor Story Walk® events to encourage children and families to leave electronics behind, enjoy the outdoors and connect with each other.

The StoryWalk® events are scheduled during the national observance of Screen-Free Week, April 29 to May 5, and will take place at the Pinti Field Walking Track in Rome, Robertson Park in Sherrill and Erwin Pratt Park in Boonville. The events highlight the purpose of Screen-Free Week: providing children and families the opportunity to unplug from digital entertainment and spend more time reading, playing and exploring.

“There is a lot of debate about how much is too much when it comes to screen time for kids,” said Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. “What we know is kids are spending much more time inside, inactive, watching TV or on screens, then spending time at outdoor creative, thinking play. Screen-free weeks, and events like the StoryWalk®, are great ways to jumpstart kids into more reading and physical activity.”

At each of the StoryWalk® events, laminated pages from a children’s book are attached to wooden posts which are installed along an outdoor path. As you stroll, walk, run or play along the trail, you are directed to the next page in the story. The StoryWalk® program is provided through the Oneida County Health Department’s Creating Healthy Schools and Communities initiative, which focuses on providing opportunities for physical activity and nutrition to combat obesity and build a healthier community.

“Is all screen time bad? No,” said Oneida County Director of Health Phyllis D. Ellis, MSN, BS, F.A.C.H.E. “But for most children, time spent with electronic devices consumes any other leisure activity. They need to learn when to turn it off, and they need to have healthy, fun alternatives.”

**-More-**

The public is invited to stop by each of the events any time during daylight hours from Monday, April 29 through Monday, May 5:

- **Boonville StoryWalk®** featuring “What Do You Do With A Chance” by Kobi Yamada.
  - Erwin Pratt Park on the campus of the Erwin Library and Dodge Pratt Northam Art and Community Center on Schuyler Street
- **Sherrill StoryWalk®** featuring “The Gruffalo” by Julia Donaldson.
  - Robertson Park on Wayland Street
- **Rome StoryWalk®** featuring The Listening Walk by Paul Showers.
  - Pinti Field Walking Track, 200 6th Street.

The StoryWalk® Project ([www.kellogghubbard.org/storywalk](http://www.kellogghubbard.org/storywalk)) was created by Anne Ferguson and developed in cooperation with the Kellogg Hubbard Library and the Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition.