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CATSKILL HUDSON A  
KATHRYN REED  
598 STATE ROUTE 24  
HIGHLAND NY 12526

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## New program offers help attracting health care talent

BY DYLAN SKRILOFF

Communities need to consider how to attract health care talent to their community, says Kathryn Reed, executive director of Catskill Hudson Area Health Education Center (CH-AHEC). To that end, her organization has announced the beginning of HealthMatch; a "community-specific



Kathryn Reed

health professional recruitment service." They also are the recipient of a \$200,000 HEAL NY Grant for just such a project in the community of Ellenville in Ulster County. Reed made the announcements at an April 17 press conference at CH-AHEC's office in Highland.

Ellenville needs at least two primary care physicians and two specialists, said Reed. Professionals from CH-AHEC will be meeting with hospital, business, town and village leaders for the Ellenville project, through June. CH-AHEC will be doing a demographic study, conducting focus group meetings as well as considering rebranding and marketing approaches. "Normally a town would have to hire me. In this instance it's a grant," she said.

A CH-AHEC press release said the HealthMatch program takes action to:

- "Educate local stakeholders to take responsibility in promoting better community health and become ambassadors in the effort to bring healthcare professionals to the community."

- "Conduct need assessments to determine what type of and how many healthcare professionals are needed in each community."

- "Work with communities to develop strategies for raising private and public support, including that from local, state and/or federal grants."

- "Assist communities to market themselves as desirable neighborhoods for healthcare professionals to live and work."

- "Develop collaborative partnerships with local hospitals, industry and foundations to establish financial pools dedicated to providing financial incentives for healthcare professionals to relocate to the area."

Reed said, "I don't think rural communities have thought enough about rebranding themselves. When moving into an area, people think about education and health care. You have to make your community more attractive than the next because they are vying for the same doctors. Each community will be unique in its approach." AHEC will consider both empty storefronts and space at Ellenville hospital as potential homes for new doctors, Reed said. "It will depend on what the physicians want to do. We will not force anyone into something they don't want."

CH-AHEC credits Assemblyman Peter Lopez, Assemblyman Kevin Cahill, Assemblywoman Nancy Calhoun and State Senator John J. Bonacic as helping to secure the \$200,000 grant. Several dignitaries spoke at the press conference.

- Steven Kelley, FACHE, President and CEO of Ellenville Hospital, said "the program is a great help to get everyone on the same page and work together."

- Assemblyman Peter Lopez of the 127th district said, "attracting physicians to rural areas is critical."

- Ellenville Mayor Jeffrey Kaplan said, "We believe in small, cohesive communities, a sense that you're a name and not a number. This program will help that."

- Neil Calman, MD, President and CEO, Institute for Family Health said "increased health care means more need for doctors. Communities need to put their best foot forward [to attract medical talent]."