

By Joyce Lee, RN, MPA

IS ONTARIO COUNTY READY FOR AN EMERGENCY?

As we look back to the great tragedy that the United States faced in 2001, we see that Emergency Preparedness activities have become a way of life. In response to federal mandates and state planning needs, the Ontario County Department of Public Health is taking the initiative to prepare our area for Public Health emergencies that may arise.

Mandates by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and New York State have directed public health departments to give medicine to county residents within 48 hours. Ontario County Public Health has been meeting with leadership from schools, towns, villages and cities to come up with a plan to do this. The groundwork has been laid and now we are reaching out to the community to ask for assistance in recruiting volunteers to help with the plan.

We are looking for people who would be willing to work at a clinic where medication is given to area residents. The goal is to set up a site in every school district in the county. We need people who would be willing to serve in key roles – both medical and non medical - to assure that we are prepared. No prior training or experience is required for those looking to volunteer for a non medical role. We will provide training and offer opportunities to participate in drills.

If you are interested in learning more about this important public health and community sponsored project or in volunteering, please call your local city, town or village office. You can also go to the Ontario County Public Health website www.ontariocountypublichealth.com and look for the Emergency Planning Area.

Although we can never know when or where an emergency will occur, history has proven that it will occur. History has also shown that the better prepared we are, the better we will survive whatever that emergency may be. We need your help to prepare – please consider volunteering for this very important project.