

April puts county's support services in spotlight

April is National County Government Month, providing an opportunity to spotlight the many ways that county government supports residents and brings people together. Each year since 1991, counties nationwide have used this month to celebrate and promote the ways that they positively impact lives while building healthier, more inclusive communities and serving residents with needed programs and services. The theme for this month is "Serving the Underserved."

For example, Erie County government is at the forefront of public health and wellness. In May 2014, my administration opened the Erie County Health Mall at 1500 Broadway in Buffalo, bringing critical health care services to an area that had been devastated by the closure of prior health clinics. Open to all county residents regardless of where they reside, the Health Mall has seen thousands of visitors and is the first of

its kind in Western New York to bring together primary, dental and mental health care under one roof. Additionally, it is the only provider of primary care in the 14212 ZIP code.

Even if you are not using the Health Mall, it's likely that county services touch your life in another way. Erie County provides significant funding to the Meals on Wheels program, which brings nutritious meals and friendly companionship to seniors and other individuals who are not able to leave their homes. For some of these recipients, it's much more than a hot meal being delivered; it's a chance, maybe the only one they'll have all day, to have conversation and interact with another live person. I was honored to deliver Meals on Wheels personally just a few weeks ago and can attest to

what it means for the people who receive them. In many ways, Meals on Wheels is a lifeline for county residents, and county government is proud to support it.

County government also serves the underserved through dedicated support of the Rural Transit Service. As I've said many times, our county is actually like a small state with urban, suburban and rural areas and a population that is equal to that of five states. For residents without their own vehicles, transportation can be a big issue, especially for those living in our rural areas. County government helps to fill this critical need by providing vital funding for Rural Transit

Service, which provides thousands of rides annually for people in the county's rural areas and connects them to the services they need.



**MARK
POLONCARZ**

Erie County
Executive