

Schumer urges tighter controls on painkillers

Experts: Abuse of prescription hydrocodone leads to heroin use



TARRYTOWN, NY – On April 3rd at Student Assistance Services’ Office in Tarrytown, Senator Charles Schumer was joined by local dignitaries, including members of the county government, law enforcement, substance abuse treatment and prevention professionals, the United Way, community coalitions, and a father whose son died of a heroin overdose. Senator Schumer announced that he is introducing a bill called the Safe Prescribing Act 2013 to reclassify hydrocodone, the generic form of Vicodin, so that it will become a Schedule II narcotic. Once a drug receives this classification a written or electronic prescription from the practitioner and a new prescription are needed for each refill.

The Lower Hudson Valley like the rest of New York State has seen the level of prescription drug use and heroin use rise. Young people take prescription drugs and then graduate to the more potent painkillers like hydrocodone. Eventually, some users become addicted and then switch to heroin because it is cheaper and more accessible.

Since late last year, there have been at least five fatalities due to suspected heroin overdoses in northern Westchester and Putnam counties. Police have made as many as 30 arrests since December involving heroin sales and possession in the two counties.

Lt. Nick Alongi said Westchester County police have seized more than 50,000 decks of heroin from patrols on county roadways.

Jeffrey Veatch of Yorktown, whose teenage son died of a heroin overdose in 2008, was at the event.

“I tell the kids this, Justin died of a drug overdose 10 feet away from our bed in the neighboring bedroom and we didn’t have a clue that he was in trouble,” Veatch said.