

WBFO News[print this page](#)**Erie County Keeping Tension in Check with New Kiosks**

Joyce Kryszak

BUFFALO, NY (2009-05-04) Anybody who has ever dealt with Erie County bureaucracy or stepped into legislative chambers during a heated session knows it can be pretty stressful. Imagine having to work there every day. But now county workers can step into the hall and keep their blood pressure in check.

Ah, budget time at county hall. You could almost cut the tension with a knife. It is not uncommon to see folks storm out of chambers or hear angry constituents shouting during public hearings. Kevin Hosey gets to hear it all the time. He is the communication director for the legislature.

But now Hosey can make sure all that stress isn't making him sick. A new blood pressure kiosk was installed last week just outside the chamber doors. Hosey volunteers to demonstrate.

The machine looks like those you see at drug stores. But this one is more sophisticated. Employees put in their individual computer chip card, "smartcard" to begin the test. The blood pressure is read and then recorded on a secure web site. The last 30 readings can be tracked and printed out. Or, if the worker chooses, can be accessed on the web by their doctor. Let's see how Hosey made out.

"Wow, it says I'm at the absolute low stage of border-line hypertension," said Hosey.

That's a real red flag for Hosey. He said he will check his blood pressure here for a few days and call the doctor if the numbers don't come down. That's exactly what county health officials want. Cheryl Moore runs the county wellness program. She said the county is installing nine kiosks in county buildings to help improve employee health. A state wellness grant covered the roughly \$50,000 total cost. Moore said they're worth it.

"By having one person not have cardiac event, that's savings in the hundreds of thousands of dollars," said Moore.

Moore said they did a test of the program in January with about 50 employees. Hundreds wanted to participate. So, the county thinks they'll get used. After his test, Hosey at the legislature thinks the blood pressure checks are a good idea too.

"I know I was surprised when I found out I had high blood pressure. I'm glad I found out. That was about ten years ago," said Hosey. It's under control now - despite this last reading."

Well, the machines do take into account that a person might have just run up the stairs - or had a noisy reporter standing nearby. The machines also give users an average of their last ten readings. Oh, and the public is welcome to use them too.

Click the audio player above to hear Joyce Kryszak's story now or use your podcasting software to download it to your computer or iPod.

© Copyright 2009, WBFO