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The Ty Louis Campbell Foundation's Muddy Puddles Mess Fest – a day to celebrate kids being kids in honor of those who can't – returned Aug. 6 at Kiwi Country Day Camp in Mahopac. Photos by Laurie Spens Photography.

## Muddy Puddles Mess Fest Lives Up to Its Name



The day included a whipped cream pie toss, slime making, bubbles galore, swimming, boating, a bounce pillow and — as always — the "dirty dunk" in a giant pool of mud, all to raise funds for pediatric cancer research. Additional photos are on pages 8 and 9.

## Putnam Hospital to Reopen Labor & Delivery in Dec.

By Holly Crocco

"Since our last visit, I have to say the conditions at Putnam Hospital have actually improved," hospital President Dr. Mark Hirko told lawmakers at the County Legislature's Aug. 9 Health Committee meeting.

Putnam Hospital is planning to reopen its labor and delivery unit in December, as leadership is currently looking at architectural renderings for a planned facelift of the department.

"We have been working with a hospital laborist model, where we will have 24/7 in-house coverage of labor and delivery, with a physician on-site at all times, and this group will cover us," said Hirko.

In addition, the hospital plans to have emergency triage of patients in the labor and delivery unit, so women in labor can be assessed and either admitted or sent home without having to go through the main emergency department.

Hirko said leadership has developed a three-year plan to help turn the overall state of the hospital from where it is now, with an anticipated \$24 million operating loss, to get it close to even within the next three to five years.

This involves growing primary care and outpatient programs, and working with various service lines such as neuroscience, heart and vascular, and the cancer institute, to bring people onboard to work and attract more patients.

According to Hirko, the emergency department saw its busiest months since before COVID, in June and July. For the year, the patient load in the emergency department is up almost 7.5 percent. While that does not necessarily correlate to increased admissions at the hospital, he said, it's encouraging to see people choosing Putnam when they need emergent medical care.

At the height of the COVID pandemic, Hirko said the emergency department saw about 40 patients per day, with wait times of 4 hours. Now, only on the occasion does someone wait without being seen because they had to wait more than an hour, he said.

Putnam Hospital is also leveraging technology to improve patient care, such as in the area of stroke management and resuscitation.

"If you have a stroke, you go to Putnam Hospital, you will be diagnosed and treated by the ER physician, immediately scanned and, using our kiosk telemedicine, have an expert neurology see you while you are here, remotely, and make a diagnosis and determine, can be treated here or do you need intervention at a tertiary facility," explained Hirko.

He also said Putnam Hospital's psychiatry services are "strong," with the unit running at or over-capacity. "We have probably one of the busiest inpatient psychiatric units in this part of the state," he said.

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## U.S. Gas Prices Fall Below \$4 Per Gallon Putnam Hasn't Yet Reached That Trend

As of last week, the U.S. national average price of gas had

per gallon at the Shell, Mobil and Route 6 Fuel stations on Route 6



# Young - and Young at Heart - Make a Splash at Mess Fest



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