

District 17 • SPRING 2011

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# LEGISLATIVE WATCH

from Suffolk County Legislator

# LOU D'AMARO

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## *A Message From Legislator D'Amaro*

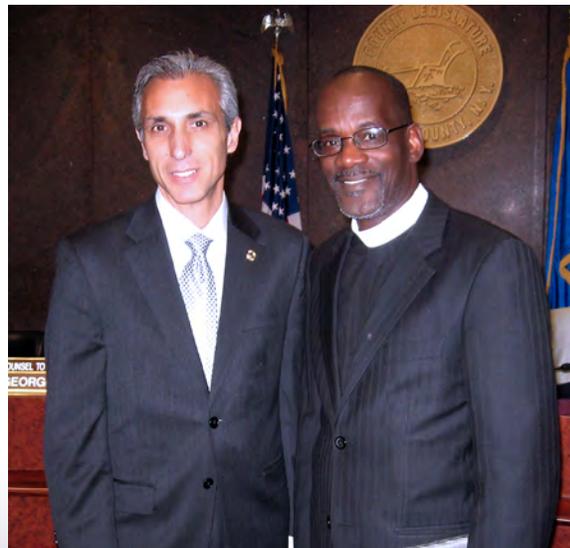
Neighborhood safety has always been one of my top priorities in the Legislature. I believe people have a fundamental right to feel safe and secure in their homes and on our roads. With this in mind, I wanted to update you on two innovative initiatives I sponsored that recently became law in Suffolk County.

The first bill, passed late last year, establishes a new higher standard for court mandated breath-alcohol ignition interlock devices that must be installed in the vehicles of convicted DWI offenders. It requires all Suffolk offenders sentenced to a period of probation, or given a conditional discharge that includes the installation of a breath alcohol ignition interlock device as part of their sentencing, to purchase devices that

include real time internet monitoring, voice instruction, global positioning satellite technology, driver photo capability and 911 emergency response capabilities. The passage of this bill sends a direct message to both DWI offenders and the public at large that drunk driving will not be tolerated by any means in Suffolk County.

The second bill is a prime example of democracy in action. Following a call to my office last year from a concerned constituent, I introduced legislation requiring the County to provide telephone and text message notifications to all persons residing in areas where ground and/or aerial mosquito control pesticide spraying is scheduled to occur. The Legislature unanimously approved the bill, which has since been used as a model to disseminate other important notifications regarding County activities that may impact the health of our residents.

See Page 2 for more information on these initiatives, which will go a long way toward keeping Suffolk residents as safe and informed as possible. You have my commitment that I will continue to advocate for common sense laws that both protect our communities and enhance our quality of life. It remains a privilege to serve as your representative in County government and, as always, I encourage you to contact me should the need arise.



*Reverend Lawrence Jennings of Bethel AME Church in Huntington was recently invited by Legislator D'Amaro to open the Legislature's General Session meeting with a non-denominational prayer. He is shown here just prior to delivering his message of peace and hope.*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lou D'Amaro".

# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

## Heroin & Opiate Advisory Panel Educates Public

In August 2010, the Suffolk County Legislature tasked a panel of experts with the important job of educating the public about the growing heroin epidemic riddling Suffolk County communities. The Suffolk County Heroin/Opiate Advisory Panel included health professionals, policy analysts, agency regulators, and community advocates representing schools, law enforcement, and health providers. The group gathered statistical information related to drug abuse and treatment among adolescents and young adults in Suffolk County. They also held two public meetings where task force members heard wrenching stories from local parents about their teens' addictions. Many individuals testified that they had no idea what to do and where to find appropriate help.

The panel presented its report and recommendations to the Legislature in December 2010. Chief among those recommendations is an educational effort geared toward defining the difference between detox and rehab, as well as routine screening for drug use, more aggressive and broad-reaching community-based prevention programs, and hands-on intervention tools for parents in the midst of crisis.

The Panel urges parents to learn the types and levels of services available along the prevention, treatment and recovery spectrum. These services include:

**In-Patient Detox** treatment, which generally occurs in a hospital based setting when acute medical intervention is necessary to stabilize an addicted patient. This type of treatment is appropriate for an individual whose withdrawal poses a medical danger.

**Out-Patient Detox** treatment, which requires medical supervision and possibly medication, but does not require the patient to be admitted into a hospital setting.

**Rehabilitation** treatment, which provides short or long term inpatient care that stabilizes the individual and prepares them for on-going outpatient treatment and self-help support.

**Out-patient** treatment, which can be intensive or less intensive with multiple hours of daily to weekly sessions that often include education and group work.

If you are seeking assistance with a drug or alcohol problem the following referral resources are immediately available by calling the New York State Hope Line at **1-877-8-HOPENY** or the Suffolk County Division of Community Mental Hygiene Services at **853-8500**.

## Legislator D'Amaro's Health & Safety Initiatives Bill Sets Tougher Standards for DWI Ignition Interlock Devices

According to statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, alcohol-impaired driving takes an enormous toll in the United States, killing approximately one person every 40 minutes. Despite continued efforts by advocates nationwide, nearly 13,000 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes in 2007, a figure that has remained remarkably steady during the last two decades. Many of the drivers involved in these fatal crashes have been arrested previously for DWI offenses. In fact, more than 1.46 million drivers were arrested in the United States in 2006 for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics, a rate equal to one DWI arrest for every 139 licensed drivers in the U.S.

In a resounding victory for advocates of tougher drunk driving regulations, Legislator D'Amaro

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sponsored a new law that establishes higher standards for court mandated breath alcohol ignition interlock devices (BAIID) that must be installed in the vehicles of convicted DWI offenders.

“This bill sets the highest possible standards for these potentially life-saving devices and will have no impact on the County budget or Suffolk taxpayers because the onus is on the offender to pick up all applicable costs,” D’Amaro said. “This is a small price for the offenders to pay to purchase the enhanced safety features that could save lives on our roadways.”

He added, “The legislation also raises the bar on the type of technology we want to promote while simultaneously spurring competition amongst the local businesses that are at the forefront of the BAIID manufacturing industry. Over the next five years, Suffolk County is expected to have upwards of 3,000 DWI offenders using a court-mandated BAIID. With these individuals on our roads, it makes perfect sense to do everything we possibly can to protect the public. I thank my colleagues for supporting this law and urge other municipalities across the State to also send a message to DWI offenders by adopting similarly strong BAIID standards.”

## **Constituent-Inspired Legislation Notifies Local Residents about Scheduled Mosquito Spraying**

The Suffolk County Department of Health Services regularly seeks to protect County residents from West Nile Virus by conducting ground and aerial vector control spraying in high risk areas where disease carrying mosquitoes have been identified. The Department advises all individuals, especially children, the elderly and expectant mothers, to remain indoors with the windows and doors closed during and shortly after mosquito spraying to protect their health. Previously, information about upcoming sprayings was posted on the Department’s webpage, sent via email to residents who had requested notifications and forwarded to local newspapers and television stations. However, there was no guarantee that the media would provide the information to the public or that residents would even read about it in the newspaper or see it on television. When a constituent shared these very same concerns with Legislator D’Amaro he immediately reached out to County officials to find a better and broader way to disseminate the spraying schedule.

“While the low-dose sprayings are considered safe for most populations, I agreed with my constituent that individuals should have the option to decide what, if any, precautions they want to take when spraying is scheduled in their neighborhoods,” D’Amaro said. “This concept goes hand in hand with our ongoing efforts to promote an open and transparent government.”

Once the notification idea was established, the next step in the process was finding the most cost-efficient, taxpayer-friendly method of dissemination. After consultations between Legislator D’Amaro, the County Executive’s office and representatives from the Division of Vector Control, the officials decided that the County could utilize its existing CodeRED emergency notification system. CodeRED is capable of making pre-recorded calls to landline telephones and also providing similar notice via cell phone and email on an opt-in basis. The system, which is already fully funded and operational, gives the County the ability to make thousands of calls to specified areas in a relatively short period of time. There is also a sufficient amount of pre-paid minutes to include mosquito spraying calls to the current list of CodeRED emergency notifications at no additional cost to the County.

For more information about mosquito control or to opt-in to the cell phone and email notification program, contact the Suffolk County Division of Vector Control at [sc.vector@co.suffolk.ny.us](mailto:sc.vector@co.suffolk.ny.us) or (631) 852-4270.

# Honoring Our Community Leaders

## Chief of Staff Named One of LI's Top Young Professionals



Justin Littell, Legislator D'Amato's Chief of Staff who is a visible presence at community events throughout the district and Suffolk County, has been named one of Long Island's Top Young Professionals by the Huntington Chamber of Commerce. Thirty individuals under the age of thirty from throughout Long Island were selected for this honor in recognition of their achievements in leadership and service. Justin is an avid community volunteer who serves on the board of the NephCure Foundation, an organization committed to supporting research seeking the cause of potentially debilitating kidney diseases. He is a Summa Cum Laude graduate of Fairfield University.

## Suffolk County Woman of Distinction Hails from District 17

Huntington Station resident Lorraine Boccio was selected as the 2011 Suffolk County Woman of Distinction! Ms. Boccio is a tireless community volunteer and advocate who has organized countless fundraisers, tributes, veterans events and community service projects for local residents, including many who lost loved ones in the tragic September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. The Woman of Distinction Award was established in 2002 to honor Suffolk women who have demonstrated leadership, involvement and commitment to community outside of their job responsibilities. Each Legislator selects one woman to receive the local honor and, from that group of candidates, the Suffolk County Women's Advisory Commission selects a single county-wide "Woman of Distinction." Congratulations Lorraine!



## North Babylon Resident Receives Senior of the Year Award



Rhoda Newman who gives selflessly of her time to make the community a nicer place for her fellow seniors and neighbors, was honored by Legislator D'Amato as District 17's 2011 Senior Citizen of the Year. Since 2000, Ms. Newman has been an active volunteer at the Spangle Drive Senior Center in North Babylon where she currently serves as treasurer of the senior committee. She organizes many activities at the Center, including arts and crafts instruction and knitting baby outfits for single mothers. In recognition of her efforts, Ms. Newman was named the 2009 Spangle Drive Senior Citizen of the Year. She resides in North Babylon with her husband, Marty.

## Honoring Our Community Leaders (continued)

### Deer Park VFW Top Cop and Firefighter of the Year Recognized



Legislator D'Amato visited the Suffolk County Police Department's First Precinct headquarters (left) to present a Proclamation to Officer Matthew Colonna in recognition of being named the Edward K. Peisker VFW Post's "Top Cop" and the Deer Park Fire Department headquarters (right) to honor Lt. Kevin Smith on being named the "Firefighter of the Year."



Congratulations and thank you to these brave men who do so much to keep our community safe and secure.

## Out in the Community

### Huntington-Based SeniorNet Receives National Recognition

Navigating the information superhighway can be especially frustrating for older adults who are often ambivalent about new technology. However, thanks to the hard work of SeniorNet at Family Service League of Long Island, those roads have become much friendlier for thousands of Suffolk County senior citizens. And now, for the second consecutive year, the National SeniorNet organization has bestowed its highest honor, the Chairman Award in Excellence, upon the Western Suffolk-based chapter. In recognition of their efforts and this award, Legislator D'Amato visited the center to honor the all-volunteer organization's instructors and members. For more information on SeniorNet classes, which are offered at little or no cost, contact SeniorNet at 631-427-3700 ext. 268 or ext. 235, or via email at [snooffice@fsl-li.org](mailto:snooffice@fsl-li.org). Or, visit their website at [www.seniornetli.org](http://www.seniornetli.org)



### Homeowners Discuss Local Matters



Legislator D'Amato attended the monthly meeting of the Northgate at Melville Homeowners' Association to discuss issues of local concern and learn about legislative initiatives that impact the community. If you would like Legislator D'Amato to meet and speak with your civic or community group, email [karen.klafter@suffolk-countyny.gov](mailto:karen.klafter@suffolk-countyny.gov) or contact his district office at (631) 854-4433.

## Out in the Community (continued)

### Play Ball: Local Youth Leagues Enjoy Rite of Spring

Everyone is an MVP on Opening Day! Legislator D'Amaro joined several local baseball and softball youth leagues for Opening Day 2011 festivities.



Babylon Town Receiver of Taxes Corinne DiSomma, Legislator Lou D'Amaro, Babylon Town Supervisor Steve Bellone, League President Mike Filippone, Babylon Town Councilwoman Jackie Gordon and Deer Park Fire District Commissioner Thomas Donnelly celebrate Opening Day 2011 with some of the players from the North Babylon Youth League.

Pictured back starting second from left, Legislator D'Amaro, Huntington Town Councilwoman Susan Berland, Huntington Town Councilwoman Glenda Jackson and Babylon Town Supervisor Steve Bellone help kick-off the St. Hugh-St. Elizabeth Baseball/Softball League's 2011 season with some of this year's players and coaches.



### Follow the Rainbow to a Healthy Lifestyle

Students at Chestnut Hill Elementary School in Dix Hills learned how the path to a healthy lifestyle can begin by "Eating the Rainbow," thanks to the efforts of their PTA nutrition committee. The "Eating the Rainbow" program encouraged, educated and supported healthy eating habits in students and their families by highlighting the variety of colorful fruits and vegetables they should consume on a daily basis. Chestnut Hill was the first of the seven elementary schools in the Half Hollow Hills district to implement this program. Legislator D'Amaro joined students, parents, teachers and administrators to celebrate the successful conclusion of their week-long program.

