

District 17 • SPRING 2013

Serving Deer Park • Dix Hills • Huntington • Huntington Station •  
Melville • North Babylon • South Huntington • West Hills



# LEGISLATIVE WATCH

from Suffolk County Legislator

# LOU D'AMARO

130 West Jericho Turnpike, Huntington Station, NY 11746 • Phone: (631) 854-4433  
[lou.damaro@suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:lou.damaro@suffolkcountyny.gov)

## *A Message From Legislator D'Amaro*

Plan on doing some home improvements? Now, before you hire a contractor or start ripping out any walls, you can avoid getting ripped off thanks to a new law I passed directing the County's Consumer Affairs Department to provide swift, easy access to prior complaints and violations recorded against licensed County contractors. I drafted this law after hearing from several frustrated constituents who informed me that the County's present policy was to tell consumers only the number of complaints or violations of record, but not their substance, whether or not they are still outstanding, or whether fines imposed, if any, were paid.

Passage of this measure is a big victory for Suffolk County consumers. For the first time in Suffolk's history, residents will now be able to obtain a contractor's entire track record to make an informed hiring decision, thereby helping to avoid a contractor with an unacceptable work history. This new law was unanimously approved by the Legislature and is now in effect. The additional services will be provided by existing County staff at no additional cost to taxpayers and I encourage all County residents to take advantage of this new policy.

See Page 2 for a more detailed listing of the information that is now available from the Department and how to make a request.

This is another example of legislation I developed in response to concerns that were brought to my attention by local residents. In 2010, I passed a law requiring telephone and text message notifications to all residents living within areas scheduled for pesticide spraying. This idea stemmed from a conversation I had with a constituent who pointed out to me that spraying notifications were only publicized in newspapers that residents may not read. So, the next time you think "there ought to be a law" you might be right. Let me know!

Please contact my office at (631) 854-4433 if you have any suggestions or if I may be of any assistance.

Very truly yours,

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

# REACHING FOR THE STARS AT THE VANDERBILT PLANETARIUM

It was indeed a starry, starry night when business and community leaders, elected officials and residents from throughout the County joined the Vanderbilt Museum administrators and board members at “An Evening Under the Stars,” the grand re-opening of the Centerport museum’s Planetarium. Legislator D’Amaro was fortunate to be among those who came out to celebrate the completion of the \$4 million renovation to the Planetarium. The highlight of the 18-month project, primarily funded by Suffolk County which owns the 43-acre former estate of William K. Vanderbilt II, is a \$3.2 million new projection system. The centerpiece of the system is the state-of-the-art Infinium L Star Projector, part of the GeminarStar System, which replaced a 41-year-old projector that had been in operation since the planetarium opened in 1971. For more information and show times, visit [vanderbiltmuseum.org](http://vanderbiltmuseum.org) or call (631) 854-5589.



## ***CONSUMER PROTECTION: Now Just a Phone Call Away!***

Legislator D’Amaro’s bill, “Establishing Disclosure Requirements for the Department of Labor, Licensing and Consumer Affairs (The Consumer Protection and Awareness Act)” was passed at the Legislature’s March 5<sup>th</sup> General Meeting and signed into law by County Executive Steve Bellone shortly thereafter.

Upon request, residents will now be able to receive the following information regarding any licensed contractor:

- A description of all complaints registered against the subject contractor in the preceding five years
- The number of violations issued by the Consumer Affairs Department to the subject contractor in the preceding five years
- A description of the nature of said violations
- An explanation of how each violation was resolved
- The amount of any monetary penalties assessed against the contractor and the extent to which those penalties were paid

In order to streamline the process, consumers will be limited to information requests for up to three contractors every 90 days. However, individuals will still be able to obtain records older than five years and for more than three contractors pursuant to Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) procedures. To protect the privacy of contractors, information that is proprietary or personal in nature, such as banking records, social security numbers, home addresses and home telephone numbers, will not be released to the public. Internal Consumer Affairs Department documents and employee notes are also precluded from release.

Another component of the bill relates to the records from administrative hearings conducted by the Consumer Affairs Department following a contractor investigation. These hearings can ultimately lead to violations, fines and even license revocations for the most unscrupulous contractors. Currently, records of these proceedings are only available via an audio recording. Under the new law, however, a verbatim stenographic transcript of the hearing will be required unless both the complainant and the subject contractor agree to accept a tape recording.

The final component of the bill directs the Consumer Affairs Department to work in concert with the Information Technology Department to make the aforementioned information available online. To the extent that this information is posted on the web, Consumer Affairs will be relieved of its obligation to supply individuals with hard copies of the records.

Residents interested in requesting contractor records or any additional information should contact Consumer Affairs at (631) 853-4600.



## NEW WOMEN'S ADVOCATE SELECTED FOR COMMISSION



Legislator D'Amato was pleased to appoint Dix Hills resident Susan F. Friedman, an insurance coverage attorney with Marsh & McLennan who does risk advising, as the 17th Legislative District's new representative on the Suffolk County Women's Advisory Commission. A proven leader and a role model for the entire community, Ms. Friedman has been a strong advocate for women. Throughout her professional career, Ms. Friedman has been committed to identifying issues of importance to women and developing initiatives in response to those issues. Acting in an advocacy role, the Commission makes recommendations to the Suffolk County Division of Women's Services, the County Executive and the Legislature

to eliminate discrimination against women; to insure equal opportunity for women and to promote the status of women in both the private and public sectors.

## SPATAFORA NAMED TO YOUTH BOARD

Life-long Huntington Station resident Raymond R. Spatafora was appointed by Legislator D'Amato to represent District 17 on the Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council (YBCC). The 36-member YBCC advises the County Executive on children and youth matters to ensure effective countywide planning, development and management of resources. For more than three decades, Mr. Spatafora coordinated and supervised participants in the Project EXCEL summer work program for disadvantaged youths. He also serves as a youth mentor for the Tri-CYA Teen Center. Mr. Spatafora is currently a licensed security officer for the South Huntington School District, where the Walt Whitman High School graduate is a constant presence and familiar face to students at sporting events and other after-school activities.



## WOMAN OF DISTINCTION HONORED



Legislator D'Amato was proud to recognize Audrey Jacullo as District 17 Woman of Distinction for 2013. A mother and grandmother who strongly believes that investing in children is the key to our future, Ms. Jacullo is a tireless advocate who has generously given of her time and talent for over 27 years to ensure that students receive the best education possible. A current North Babylon School District board member who was first elected in 1986 and has assumed several leadership roles, including a term as vice president, Ms. Jacullo supports high education standards and a safe and healthy environment in which students can learn. She is a board member and past president of the New York State REFIT (Reform Educational Financing Inequities Today), was appointed to the New York State School Boards Association Federal Relations Network, where she travelled to Washington DC to meet with elected officials and make the case about the urgent need for additional public education funding, and is a recipient of many PTA awards. She recently received the 2013 SCOPE (Suffolk Coalition of Public Employees) Award for Excellence in School Board Service. Her service, leadership and dedication are an inspiration to the entire community.



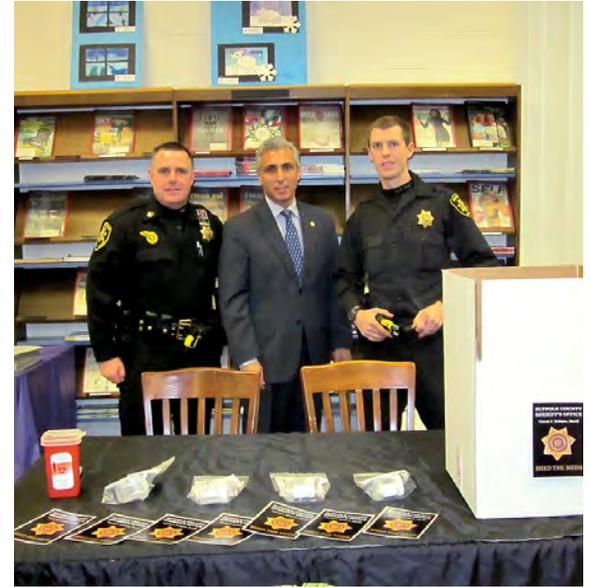
Know an outstanding woman, senior citizen, firefighter, emergency services technician, volunteer or student? Legislator D'Amato is always interested in honoring our neighbors who are doing extraordinary

things. If you or anyone you know is deserving of this recognition, please send an email to [Karen.klafter@suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:Karen.klafter@suffolkcountyny.gov) and tell us about him or her.

# Caring for the Community

## CLEANING OUT THE CABINETS TO KEEP THE ENVIRONMENT CLEAN

Studies have found that the improper disposal of medications can have unintended negative consequences. Flushing these substances may result in groundwater contamination and simply throwing them out in the garbage provides an opportunity for abusers to gain access to the discarded products. With this in mind, Legislator D’Amaro recently held a “Shed the Meds” event at the North Babylon Public Library. Residents who brought their unwanted medications to the library were greeted by Suffolk County Sheriffs who ensured the safe disposal of the items. If you missed the event, you can bring your unused and unwanted medications, as well as unused disposable needles, to any Suffolk County police precinct, 24 hours a day for placement in anonymous drop boxes. Medications should be removed from their prescription bottles and placed in a plastic bag prior to being dropped off at one the following local precincts:



First Precinct, 555 Route 109, West Babylon  
Second Precinct, 1071 Park Avenue, Huntington

## DIVE IN AND READ!

Sunquam Elementary School in Melville recently invited Legislator D’Amaro to share the importance of reading in his life by participating in its “Mystery Reader Day.” The special event was held in conjunction with the annual Parents as Reading Partners (PARP) statewide program. Legislator D’Amaro surprised the students in Mrs. Belz’s 5<sup>th</sup> grade class where he shared a book about the founding fathers. Sunquam PARP Committee Co-Chairs Allison Gruberger and Jill Varlack planned an entire day-long celebration built around the theme “Dive into Reading.” Judging by the children’s faces, everyone was taking the plunge!



## WHITMAN EARN AND LEARN SETS STUDENTS ON RIGHT PATH

Walt Whitman High School’s Earn and Learn program provides students with tools, skills, mentoring and incentives to help them achieve success throughout high school and beyond. Created by local businessman Jefry Rosmarin in 2003 as a response to alarming national school drop-out statistics, the program offers a work incentive and mentoring opportunity to help stu-



dents improve their grades, enhance school participation and build self-esteem and other important life skills. Each student is “hired” as an “employee” and commits to specific requirements in schoolwork, behavior, attendance, and bi-weekly meetings with Mr. Rosmarin (who acts as their “employer”) or another mentor. Legislator D’Amaro recently visited with Mr. Rosmarin and the students to observe the program in action.