

District 17 • FALL 2016

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LEGISLATIVE WATCH

from Suffolk County Legislator

LOU D'AMARO

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A Message From Legislator D'Amaro

As I write this column, the Suffolk County Legislature's Bi-Partisan Operating Budget Working group is meeting to set major policy initiatives and optimize funding for vital County departments, programs, and services in 2017. The Operating Budget that was prepared and presented by the County Executive in September is being closely reviewed and amended by this important working group. The final document will be adopted by the full 18 member Legislature in early November. Through close cooperation with County Executive Steve Bellone, the Legislature has consistently been able to make progress toward reducing the County's budget shortfall while at the same time planning for long-term growth and prosperity. I am confident that this year will be no different. As policy makers, we are often called upon to make tough decisions to protect taxpayers. You have my commitment that I will continue to make this my top priority as your legislator.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to attend the special budgetary hearings and committee meetings and/or send emails to let the Legislature know which programs were most important to the local community. This input is always vital in our ongoing efforts to craft budgets that strike the right balance between fiscal prudence and providing critical county services. I urge you to stay informed and in touch, even after the 2017 Operating Budget is approved. You can view the budget online by visiting <http://legis.suffolkcountyny.gov/>.

As always, feel free to contact my office at (631) 854-4433 if I may be of any assistance.

Very truly yours,

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



Don't Despair if You Need a Repair!

Attention seniors: are you aware of the local town-based programs designed to help you maintain and stay in your homes? With assistance from the Suffolk County Office for Aging, these programs provide free craftsmen who are available by appointment to provide simple home repairs and installations for residents aged 60 and older. Many services can be provided, with the exception of those that require the skills of a licensed craftsman.

Eligible residents must reside in the Town of Babylon or Town of Huntington, own their own homes and live alone or with other seniors. Program volunteers provide simple maintenance and repair services like cleaning gutters, fixing faucets and installing special-needs hand rails and smoke alarms. Clients are responsible for the cost of the materials but the installation and repair work is free.

Interested residents can get more information and request appointments by calling:

Babylon: (631) 422-7680 or Huntington: (631) 351-3253, ext. 4002



Ensure you get your STAR Benefits!

Taxpayers deserve to receive every benefit to which you are entitled, which is why I wanted to make you aware of some changes in how certain homeowners must apply for the New York State School Tax Relief (STAR) Program, and also in how they receive their STAR benefit.

Amongst those changes is the requirement that homebuyers who purchased their residences after March 1, 2015 will receive their benefits in the form of a rebate check instead of as a tax credit. If you purchased a home after that date, or are in the market to buy one now, you should be aware that the annual deadline to apply for this rebate is July 1 and then reapplication is required every five years. For more information on this and other changes, please visit: www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/star

Senior Advocates Provide Important Assistance

One of the Suffolk County Office for the Aging's most important services is its Senior Advocate Community Outreach program. Through this program, Senior Advocates come out to the local community and assist seniors with information gathering, completion of eligibility or recertification applications and referrals to appropriate community agencies.

Trained representatives provide assistance with food stamps, Medicare savings programs, Medicaid applications and Heating Emergency Assistance Program (HEAP) applications. They also answer questions and make additional recommendations and referrals at regularly-scheduled times in specific locations throughout the community including

In Babylon

- Deer Park Library
- Lindenhurst Library
- North Amityville Nutrition Center
- Rainbow Center
- Spangle Drive Center
- Tanner Park Nutrition Center
- West Babylon Library
- Wyandanch Nutrition Center

In Huntington

- Huntington Library
- Huntington Senior Nutrition Center
- Paumanack Village I & II
- Paumanack Village V & VI

For more information about available services and scheduled visits, please call the Suffolk County Office for the Aging at (631) 853-8200. I urge every senior resident to take full advantage of this professional community outreach program so that they don't miss out on the County's network of services.

STAR

The School Property Tax Exemption



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 and tell us about him or her.

Employment Assistance Available for Suffolk Residents

Economic realities impact families nationwide. Suffolk County's award-winning One-Stop Employment Center may be able to provide you with valuable assistance. The One-Stop Employment Center offers free career guidance programs and also conducts monthly job fairs where prospective employees can meet with company representatives to discuss job openings. For more information and locations of upcoming job fairs, I recommend that you visit www.suffolkcountyny.gov/labor or call (631) 853-6600.

In addition, Suffolk County administers civil service exams for job titles in over 241 jurisdictions including the county, its towns and the multitude of villages, school districts and special fire, water and library districts. Interested residents can now receive e-Updates on upcoming exams and job openings. To sign up for this new program, administered through the Suffolk County Department of Human Resources and Civil Service, go to <http://eupdates.suffolkcountyny.gov/lists/>

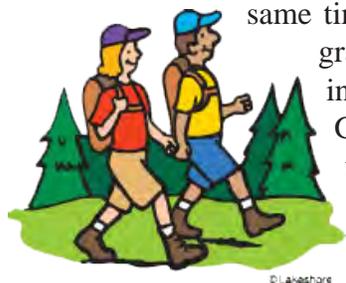
In addition, my office receives regular notices about job openings in the area. If you would like to get this information sent directly to your inbox, email karen.klafter@suffolkcountyny.gov and put "Job postings" in the subject line.

Thank You for Your Generosity

Thank you to all of the Legislative District 17 residents who so generously gave to some recent donation drives that I hosted through my district office. Earlier this year, I hosted a pet food drive for Baxter's Pet Pantry of Long Island Cares where individuals donated 502 pounds of dog and cat food and supplies! More recently, my office served as a drop-off center for new and gently-used work, casual and school apparel to assist the Long Island Coalition for the Homeless in their "Back to Business Clothing Drive" for Long Island Veterans. Once again, local residents came through in droves to support their fellow community members. For more information about either of these wonderful organizations, go to: <https://www.licares.org/>
<http://www.addressthehomeless.org/>



Take a Hike!



Fall and winter are perfect seasons to enjoy the great outdoors and get some exercise at the same time. The LONG ISLAND GREENBELT TRAIL CONFERENCE is a unique, non-profit grassroots organization that has created more than 200 miles of hiking paths on Long Island, including three National Recreation Trails. Dedicated to protecting open space and our scenic Greenbelt trails for all to enjoy, they have donated a total of over 500,000 volunteer hours to Long Island's parks and trails and lead more than 200 free guided hikes each year. For information about trails and upcoming scheduled hikes throughout Long Island, visit their website <http://ligreenbelt.org> or call (631) 360-0753.

Dix Hills Resident is Named Woman of Distinction

Congratulations to Susan F. Friedman, an attorney and advocate for children and families who I was pleased to select as the 2016 District 17 Woman of Distinction.

A Dix Hills resident for 15 years, Ms. Friedman's first contribution to the community was launching the "SouperBowl Sunday" program through the South Huntington Jewish Center. The program has evolved into an annual event that has provided over 600 lunches for residents in Suffolk County emergency housing on Superbowl Sunday. She also volunteers as a parent member on the Committee for Special Education in the Half Hollow Hills Central School District, was asked to serve on the Board of Directors of AutismNetworks.com and is the co-founder of the Marsh Women Executive's Business to Business (WEBB) Network, which boasts over 500 members and is designed to assist women with networking professionally and personally.

Ms. Friedman has also touched many other lives by volunteering at the VA Hospital, providing Big Brothers & Big Sisters mentoring, organizing book and toy drives, serving as a Cornell Alumni Admissions Ambassador and spending time with local senior citizens at assisted living facilities. She is an outstanding advocate and a well-deserving recipient of this honor.



Walt Whitman Students Win PSA Contest

Bravo to Sabrina Greenberg and Jordan Roiland, students at Walt Whitman High School in the South Huntington School District for winning Suffolk County's 2016 "Truth about Stimulant Drinks" video contest. I was pleased to honor them and their adviser Erica Cryer at the Suffolk County Legislature's General Session on Wednesday, June 1 in Hauppauge. In conjunction with a public awareness campaign, the County Legislature annually invites high school students to create a 30 second public service announcement (PSA) video incorporating their interpretation of the negative health effects associated with consuming stimulant drinks. Sabrina and Jordan's winning PSA aired on News 12 Long Island this past summer.



It's Cool to Be Pool Smart!

In June, I honored Oviya Omprakash, a student at JFK Intermediate School in Deer Park, as the Second Place Winner in Suffolk County's 2016 "Be Pool Smart" poster contest. Established in 2007, the annual competition invites elementary school students to promote the importance of pool safety and prevent accidental drowning by creating a poster that illustrates one or more safety tips. Oviya's original design was selected from amongst dozens of submissions. All students who entered the contest received a Certificate of Achievement. Pictured here with Oviya



are her art teacher Joanne Buck, her proud parents and classroom teacher Karen Hyland. Also pictured are students from JFK Intermediate School in Deer Park who participated.

