

**EDUCATION & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**  
**OF THE**  
**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

**MINUTES**

A meeting of the Education & Information Technology Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on May 26, 2015.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Leg. Sarah S. Anker, Chairperson  
Leg. Monica Martinez, Vice Chair  
Leg. Thomas Cilmi  
Leg. Lou D'Amaro  
Leg. Robert Trotta

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel to the Legislature  
Jason Richberg, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Legislature  
Ben Zwirn, Suffolk Community College  
Benny Pernice, Budget Review Office  
Amy Ellis, Aide to Leg. Anker  
Justin Littell, Aide to Leg. D'Amaro  
Greg Moran, Aide to Leg. Trotta  
Michael Pitcher, Aide to Presiding Officer  
William Shilling, Aide to Leg. Calarco  
Haewon Hake, Executive Director/Suffolk LI Mentor & Mentee  
And all other interested parties

**MINUTES TAKEN BY:**

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

**THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 11:34 AM**

**CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

Welcome to the Education and Information Technology Committee meeting. Please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator D'Amaro.

**SALUTATION**

Please remain standing for a moment of silence as we think of those in our prayers, especially for those who have given the ultimate sacrifice, their lives.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED**

Thank you.

Okay. So we do not have correspondence. We have no public comment cards. We do have a presentation. I'd like to invite Haewon Hake. She is the Executive Director of Suffolk Long Island Mentor and Mentee Program. And she will provide an overview on the current mentorship programs and services offered to Suffolk County residents.

So, welcome. Go ahead and come on up. Welcome. I know we had met in my office and you had some very interesting ideas related to the programs that you have to offer. So you have a presentation here. I'd like you to present it to our Committee. Thank you for coming.

**MS. HAKE:**

Thank you. Hi. My name is Haewon Hake. I am -- it's my honor to be here speaking with you today. I'm the Executive Director and the founder of Suffolk Long Island Mentor and Mentee program. I created this program as the chair of New Adult Committee at NASW. That is National Association of Social Workers, Suffolk Chapter. We use the term new adults. That's the adult age between 18 and 34. The reason we use that, although right now they are millennials, as millennials grow up, the following generation then would become new adults. That way our program would not cease to exist as the millennials grow up.

Now we are partnered with Suffolk County Libraries New Adult Committee. They have about 65 libraries in Suffolk County. And each library has a point person who is involved with this committee. And we're also supported by Stony Brook University, School of Social Worker Department, Sociology Department and African American Studies. Recently we are approved to work also in Yaphank and Riverhead jail, especially by Judge Camacho. He's mandating new adult population inmates as a part of their release condition.

And also what's really exciting now this office is in Setauket. But in Greenport the library director wants to replicate M&M -- i call it M&M Mentoring because it's just easier -- replicate M&M in her community. So she will recruit mentors, mentees, staff volunteers and I would provide with policies that are written and programs that are developed and train their staff. And my hope is that it will continue to evolve like that in other communities throughout Suffolk County.

The mission of our program is to assist a new adult to define their life goals and achieve them. The vision of our program is for each new adult to experience a nurturing relationship with an older adult and also experience support from the community.

I was eight-years-old when I knew that I wanted to come to America. I was born in war-torn country. I grew up eating dog food sent by Red Cross. I did not know it was dog food. I thought it was delicious meal. My mother was a slave to Japanese family. When Japan occupied South Korea, they took her and she was a slave to this family, but that's where she learned to love books.

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So although she doesn't have money to buy food, she was able to get me a book, a biography of famous American people, like Helen Keller, like Edison, like Wrights Brothers, etcetera. That's where I learned that America was a hope of all possibilities and it always has been for me. And that 8-year-old girl is actually sitting here speaking with you today.

And that girl grew up. And I went to one of the best colleges in South Korea. So the country was recovering from the war. The society was still very old and archaic. And there was nothing I could do when I was bitten and assaulted by my own father and my older brother from age seven until I left the country. I came here in 1986 to Adelphi University to study School of Social Work Master's Program. The first class I went for two hours, I didn't understand a word of English. I got fired three times from (inaudible) placement due to my poor English, and yet there were professors and other people who had the patience to see me through.

Thirty years later I live in Mt. Sinai. I have my own business of counseling. And I'm here speaking to you about a mentoring program, because when I was going to college, I really longed to have somebody who was older and wiser, whom I could confide in and tell her the story, who could guide me, understand the life. But I didn't have anybody to do that for me. But I wanted to do that for other young kids like me so that's where this dream was born first.

And then after Adelphi, 27 years of my practice, I met a lot of young people from Ivy League college kids to local college kids to kids who are at home doing nothing to kids in jail; all spectrum of kids. And they're looking for guidance in career, education and direction, social skills and recreational opportunities. So our mentors work with them and give them the specific areas, knowledge or skills and support, but most importantly what we try to emphasize is to help them face their fears and develop their courage. That is really focal point our mentoring program.

So, of course, they will do better facing all their life challenges if they have confidence. So one of our mentee, she's attending Suffolk Community College for fourth years full time. As you all know, it's not four-year college. So why is she going there for four years? Because she keeps failing classes. She doesn't have any friends. She doesn't have a job. She doesn't talk to anybody when she goes to class.

So after class she come home straight to her computer. Of course, her relationship with her parents are very strained. She was suicidal because she felt like she was burdened. And so when she was matched up with our mentor, about after four months, I checked in with her to see how she was doing. And this is exactly what she said to me: She said, "you know, I'm pretty confident that I'm going to pass all my classes this semester." She used the word confident. And on her face for the first time I realized that she believed in herself.

I have another mentee who dropped out of Suffolk Community College. She moved into group home and she reached out to us saying that all her life she wanted to have a mentor. So now she's matched with a mentor.

I have another young man when I heard about him first, he was in jail. So our mentor went to the jail, made initial contact. And he was -- this young man was in jail because of heroin addiction. And before he -- this young man didn't believe that he could get off of heroin and that's why he refused any kind of help. So when he got released from jail, he worked with a mentor. And somehow the magic of mentoring happened where he began to believe that maybe he can get off. So finally he accepted the help. He went down to Florida. He graduated rehab. He went into a halfway house. Now he got a job at Dunkin Donuts. I know that this is not a guarantee for his success, but certainly he's in the right direction.

I'd like to tell you one more story. This is the best community college student success story. His name is Jim Sinegal. He is the co-founder of Costco. Costco is fourth largest retail store in America and ninth and largest in the whole world. When he was in his early 20s, he was attending

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San Diego Community College. And one summer day like this he was helping his friend unload the mattresses to local store called Fedmart. When he went in, there was cashier opening so he got the job. And that's where he met his mentor Sol Price, Chairman of Fedmart. Sol Price taught Jim Sinegal everything there is to know about running a local store. So from there on, Jim Sinegal went on and founded Costco and Sol Price found Price Club. About 15 years ago when Price Club was not doing well, Jim bought Price Club and merged with Costco. So, hey that's a great success story.

The point that I am -- you know, I guess, I'm giving it as examples and hoping that you will understand how mentoring works in different areas of life.

And also another point I'd like to make is I know that a lot of you are involved with working with younger generation. And although it's limited, there are more resources, services, funding, grants that are available for younger kids. And theoretically I completely agree, that we need to start early. At the same time I ask you not to forget the new adult population.

We have more millennials than baby boomers. Forty percent of them are either unemployed or employed with unsustainable income, although 80% of them have participated in volunteering program or internship; fifteen percent of them have already left Long Island. By 2025, 50% of all workforce will be millennials. Remember how this County was 20 years ago, 15 years ago, and how much it changed. And if we carry that forward 20 years from now, and if millennials continue to live because they cannot stay here, we will know what that will look like. And I know you're all aware of that and that's why the programs like Stay on Long Island is happening. And I would like to add to that initiative.

And also the other side of millennial is baby boomers like me. So this -- we have this another huge population who are retiring. And they're looking for new meanings in their lives. So from psychology point of view, it is extremely important that you have something that you care about. So one of the renowned therapists, Salvador {Minijin}, he made a home visit to this old widow who was suffering with depression. After the meeting he gave her a prescription that said "plant a small tree and take care of it daily." I know of a woman who was chronically suicidal because she was afraid of her son who was heroin-addicted are going to die. But her suicide reality was completely cured when she found out that she going to have a grandchild.

Our volunteer mentors are -- actually everybody is a baby boomer generation. And although they don't get paid, this is a free program so they do not get paid, but they are very anxious to get connected with young people because it gives them meaning. And I think that's a great reason for them to stay longer on Long Island.

So my program provides something very essential for new adult population as well as for baby boomer generation. So to me it makes sense that the County supports this kind of program and really help us.

So -- and the other thing I would like to mention, is new adults generation, I don't think that they understand how important voting is for them. They hear about election voting and all that, but they don't realize how directly it relates to their voice being heard. So our mentoring program focuses on mentors working with mentees actually show them, explain to them why voting matters. And that's the way that their voice has been heard and their needs are going to be fulfilled.

So why am I here today? For many reasons. I went to Lee Zeldin's office. Lee Zeldin until last year, he was a millennial himself. So his office embraces our mission completely. And actually his office led me to Legislator Anker's office and so we met and sit down and thank you for a warm invitation and welcome. And she's the one who actually invited me here. And when we talked about our program, one thing that came out I thought would be very, very important would be connecting with Suffolk Community College. My assistant director and HR director on the board are both Suffolk Community College graduates. And I know that they are developing their own

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mentoring program. I tried to go on the website to get a better understanding of how their program works, but I couldn't get access to it. But I do know how Stony Brook University mentoring program work.

So a student has to fill out this very lengthy application. After that they are given one mentoring session. And if they request, there is one more, but that's a total of two. My mentoring program ask commitment from mentor to mentees both minimum one hour per week or four hours per month for the duration of six months. And if they request, they would be extended for another term. So as I said before earlier, facing -- learning to face your fear and developing courage cannot happen in one or two mentoring session. It can come from having a relationship with your mentor. So hopefully my presentation here today somehow, somewhere would connect us to Suffolk Community College and working with them. The second thing is exposure, like today, you know, Legislator Anker had me here so I get to speak to you about us. This is exposure. The more people realize that we exist, the more people will, of course, benefit. So if you can help me help us to get that, that would be great. The third is this is my -- this is my, like, big dream. I think there has to be some kind of campaign in Suffolk County to persuade the new millennials that we want them to stay, we want to support them. We have to persuade that somehow the message has to get across.

So one of my idea is like having an M&M house, like when people get McDonald House, they know what that is. So having M&M house is like a symbol for millennials that when they have questions, when they need support, when they need resources, when they need to network, find a low risk or no risk recreational opportunities, that we can have that. So that's floating in my mind.

The last thing is speaking with you because of your stature, because of your connection, because of your knowledge and experience, I'm sure that as you are listening to me that your mind was going and maybe have a bigger vision. Because I know when I met with Legislator Anker, immediately she came -- she thought about connecting us and working with Economic Development Committee. So something like that, I -- I'm in private practice. I don't know much about much. So hoping that you will have those ideas and guide us and direct us. So that's the last one.

I am very thankful that I live American dream. The idea that with hard work and dedication, anything is possible. And I would like to make sure that every new adult in Suffolk County have the same opportunity that I had. So I thank you for that.

### **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

Thank you so much. That was, you know, it was beautiful story. And I have to say I think you underestimate yourself, you know, you said you know nothing. You know a lot. You have so many life experiences. And I think it just shows how humble you are and how caring you are, too. You know, it was a pleasure meeting with you in my office. And, again, you have a very important program that I think could be utilized throughout Suffolk County. And I encourage the Legislators to reach out to you. We will get your information and bring that to the other Legislators. And we're looking forward to connecting you to Suffolk Community College. I know they have a Workforce Development Center and also some mentor programs. And also some -- there's an organization North Shore Youth Council and they work specifically with teens in trying to get them on the right path because that is always a challenging situation.

Do any of the Legislators have questions? We're good? We're good? Again, I want to thank you for coming out here this morning.

### **MS. HAKE:**

Thank you.

### **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

And, again, I look forward to working with you in the future. So thank you so much.

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**MS. HAKE:**

Thank you all.

**CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

Okay, I see no further business. We are adjourned.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 11:56 AM  
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**