



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Palmesano and O'Mara sponsor forum in Corning today featuring Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro to share his 'ThinkDIFFERENTLY' initiative with area leaders in business, government and the not-for-profit sector (UPDATED, February 24)

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 23, 2017

| ISSUE: **PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**



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experience and his vision with an important group of area leaders.

**Corning, N.Y., February 23**—State Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning) and Senator Tom O’Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) sponsored a local roundtable discussion today in Corning featuring Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro and area leaders in business, government and the not-for-profit sector.

Molinaro led a discussion on his “ThinkDIFFERENTLY” initiative. The roundtable was scheduled to run from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Corning-Painted Post High School cafeteria (201 Cantigney Street).

ThinkDIFFERENTLY, which Molinaro launched in Dutchess County in 2015, seeks to encourage individuals, businesses, communities and organizations to provide supportive and welcoming social and workplace environments for local residents with special needs.

“At the end of the day,” County Executive Molinaro said, “we want every citizen, regardless of ability, to be given the support, the assistance, the acceptance and the respect they deserve. By taking the first step to ‘ThinkDIFFERENTLY,’ communities are taking a major step.”

In a joint statement, Palmesano and O’Mara said, “County Executive Molinaro’s ‘ThinkDIFFERENTLY’ strategy is being recognized as a positive breakthrough for persons with developmental disabilities in Dutchess County and communities throughout New York State. It’s a creative, inspiring and fundamentally effective program making a difference for many state residents with special needs. County Executive Molinaro is recognized as one of New York’s most successful public servants and we’re grateful for this opportunity to have him share his experience and his vision with an important group of area leaders.”

Area leaders participating in today’s ThinkDIFFERENTLY roundtable included:

> Steuben County Manager Jack Wheeler;

- > Christine Sharkey, Vice President and Director of Community Development, Corning Enterprises;
- > Steuben County Sheriff James Allard;
- > Corning Police Chief Jeffrey Spaulding;
- > Dr. Ryan Peterson, Steuben County Social Services Psychologist;
- > John Zick, Director of Government and Public Affairs, AIM Independent Living Center;
- > Greater Southern Tier BOCES Administrative Assistant Dawn Nasakaitis;
- > Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development Executive Director Judy McKinney Cherry;
- > Arc of Steuben Director Bernie Berns;
- > Arc of Steuben Community Relations Coordinator Robert Recotta.
- > The Arc of Schuyler Executive Director Jeannette Frank;
- > The Arc of Chemung Associate Executive Director for Programs Sean Eagen;
- > The Arc of Chemung Human Resources Director Joanne Conley-Pease;
- > The Arc of Chemung Board of Directors Vice President Lucimar Escudero;
- > Arc of Yates Vice President of Advancement Taryn Windheim;
- > Arc of Yates Chief of Staff Mary Mansfield;

> Kamala Keeley, President & Chief Executive Officer, Chemung County Chamber of Commerce;

> Dr. Edward J. Lukomski, President & Chief Executive Officer of Pathways, Inc.;

> Able2 Executive Director Mark Peters; and

> Able2 Associate Executive Director Leisa Alger.

Elected as Dutchess County's youngest-ever county executive at the age of 36 in 2011, Molinaro is the father of a daughter who lives on the autism spectrum. He has been invited to numerous forums in counties throughout New York State over the past two years to discuss how communities can enact the ThinkDIFFERENTLY initiative.

Last June, Molinaro introduced a resolution to the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) Board of Directors, on which he serves, to promote ThinkDIFFERENTLY in all of New York's 62 counties. The board unanimously adopted the resolution. Molinaro has also encouraged every city, town and village in New York to consider adopting ThinkDIFFERENTLY resolutions fostering support for residents with special needs and approximately 50 communities statewide have already done so.

Palmesano and O'Mara personally invited Molinaro to host today's ThinkDIFFERENTLY roundtable in Corning.

The Dutchess County website provides an overview and additional information on ThinkDIFFERENTLY at: <http://www.dutchessny.gov/CountyGov/27438.htm>.

[UPDATE, February 24: Read and watch more from:

*The Leader*, "Molinaro discusses 'Think Differently'" (see attached article above)

**WETM-TV, "O'Mara, Palmesano Sponsor Dutchess County Executive's 'Think DIFFERENTLY' Special Needs Initiative"**

**WENY-TV, "Local Leaders Gather to Discuss 'ThinkDIFFERENTLY' Campaign"]**