



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Rich Funke

Molinaro joins Funke to Urge Rochester to “ThinkDIFFERENTLY”

RICH FUNKE December 6, 2017



Senator Rich Funke (R, C, and I-Fairport) hosted a public forum to discuss the “ThinkDIFFERENTLY” initiative with Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro. The presentation is part of a series Molinaro has held across the state this year to discuss ways that communities in New York can create more supportive and inclusive environments for individuals with special needs.

The presentation focused on bringing together local organizations that can collaborate together in the effort to change the way people think about residents with

special needs. Molinaro has three children, including a daughter who lives on the autism spectrum, prompting him to conceive the initiative in early 2015 in Dutchess County. Since then, Dutchess County has initiated several projects to meet the goals of “ThinkDIFFERENTLY”. They include building accessible infrastructure such as additional handicap ramps to buildings, training residents and public officials, and hosting community events for children and families living with special needs.

County Executive Molinaro said, “I’ve been thrilled by the response to our ‘ThinkDIFFERENTLY’ efforts over the past two years, and I appreciate the cities, towns and villages throughout our state which have accepted our call to change hearts and minds. I thank Senator Funke for his willingness to ‘ThinkDIFFERENTLY’ to ensure every individual of every ability has a community that welcomes them and supports them.”

Dutchess County originally applied for a Community Development Block Grant Program to pay for the projects mentioned above that would be a clear demonstration of the benefits of an inclusive environment. Molinaro took the initiative statewide in June 2016 when the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) enacted a resolution to promote “ThinkDIFFERENTLY” to all 62 counties across the state.

“The room today was filled with stakeholders from both the public and private sector, all gathered to learn about how we can do our part in making sure that we create an inclusive environment that supports people of all abilities,” said Funke. “It is my sincere hope that the conversation today expands into fiscally responsible action across the state and I thank Dutchess County Executive Molinaro for his hard work and dedication to this cause.”

For more information about this initiative, please contact the offices of Senator Rich Funke or Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro at 845-486-2000, by emailing countyexec@dutchessny.gov, or visiting thinkdifferently.net.