

Resolution No. 2016222

RESOLUTION: "THINK DIFFERENTLY" INITIATIVE

Legislators BORCHERT, MICCIO, BOLNER, and THOMES offer the following and move its adoption:

WHEREAS, the "Think Differently" initiative is about promoting awareness and acceptance of all people, and advocating for the inclusion of all individuals living on the Autism Spectrum and with special needs; and

WHEREAS, our state and communities are stronger because of our diversity and differences; and

WHEREAS, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) over 55 million people, or approximately 19% of Americans, have a type of disability or special need; and

WHEREAS, for some people with special needs, the very things that make them unique can also keep them on the sidelines, separate from those who might not understand their differences or uniqueness; and

WHEREAS, it is important to promote and provide guidance to those with special needs on how to access publically supported services available to them in the community; and

WHEREAS, it is important to encourage and educate the community and businesses on ways they can make facilities and services more accessible and on how to train staff to welcome and support special needs customers and co-workers; and

WHEREAS, the goal of this initiative is to provide a supportive and inclusive environment for individuals of all abilities by supporting community events that expand family friendly opportunities for people with special needs and their families; and

WHEREAS, Dutchess County is where the "Think Differently" initiative was created when it was proposed by County Executive Molinaro in 2015; and

WHEREAS, Dutchess County has fully embraced and supported the "Think Differently" initiative with programming and unique events such as the annual Special Needs Picnic and the Special Needs Movie Day, which affords children living with special needs and their families the opportunity to experience sensory friendly day out at the movies; and

WHEREAS, Dutchess County has continued to support projects in our community that aim to make life a little easier for those living with special needs, including directing \$150,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding towards the Wappinger Challenger field, a handicapped accessible baseball field for young people ages 5-18, allocating \$200,000 in 2014 and 2015 to Julie's Jungle, a handicapped accessible playground that children of all abilities can enjoy, and directing \$100,000 in 2016 to the Stringham Park Inclusive playground in LaGrange, which expands upon an ADA-compliant, inclusive playground facility; and

WHEREAS, Dutchess County has reaffirmed its commitment to serving those with special abilities in our community by creating the new position of Deputy Commissioner for Special Needs in order to better assist those in our county that are in need of special needs services; and

WHEREAS, adopting the “Think Differently” initiative is an important statement that our local officials, business owners and residents can make to show their support for the differently-abled children and adults with special needs, and their families, now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Dutchess County Legislature hereby adopts the “Think Differently” initiative; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Dutchess County Legislature calls on all State and County officials, residents and business owners to adopt the “Think Differently” initiative so that all are better prepared to communicate with, provide for, and support those living on the Autism Spectrum and with special needs; and be it further

RESOLVED, that copies of this Resolution be sent to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, the New York State Legislature, and the sixty-two counties of New York State encouraging member counties to enact similar resolutions.

STATE OF NEW YORK

ss:

COUNTY OF DUTCHESS

This is to certify that I, the undersigned Clerk of the Legislature of the County of Dutchess have compared the foregoing resolution with the original resolution now on file in the office of said clerk, and which was adopted by said Legislature on the 12th day of September 2016, and that the same is a true and correct transcript of said original resolution and of the whole thereof.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal of said Legislature this 12th day of September 2016.

CAROLYN MORRIS, CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE