

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Legislature and Members of the Community:

Henry Hudson came upon the Hudson River nearly 400 years ago in search of a trade route to the east. It is our good fortune to live along this majestic river's banks, where we have an opportunity to discover the Hudson again and again.

We have inherited a treasure – a county blessed with scenic beauty, proud history and diverse cultural bounty. We accept the responsibilities that go with our incredible natural and cultural heritage. The Hudson River provides a vitality that supports and invigorates us, but in exchange we know we have to cultivate and protect that vitality for the future. In 2008, as we plan for the *Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Celebration*, we look to the future by setting our course in a direction that embraces our past.

***Embracing Our Past;
Investing in Our Future***

The *Quadricentennial* is a once in a lifetime event and Dutchess County is positioned to shine in the spotlight that will be focused on our region during the celebration. We have begun with \$100,000 for the development and promotion of our recognition of the 2009 *Quadricentennial*. I have brought together the collaborative forces and leadership of Dutchess County Tourism, the Dutchess County Historian, and the *Hudson River Valley Institute* at Marist College, to showcase our past while providing us the unique opportunity to create something very special to offer to our future.

The real possibility of a walkway over the Hudson River, between Poughkeepsie and Highland, on the long idle Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge is a wonderful example of how investment in our future can embrace our past. This exciting project is being shepherded by community volunteers with commitment, passion and perseverance – all commodities we are fortunate to have in abundance in our county. I recognize and applaud those enthusiastic efforts that will result in *Walkway Over the Hudson*. These individuals and organizations embody the spirit of volunteerism and partnership that has nourished the heart and soul of Dutchess County.

What better way to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's journey than to have an engineering marvel of centuries past become a spectacular park for enjoyment through centuries to come.

We honor Henry Hudson's discovery by working together each and every day to preserve and improve it. Our responsibility as public servants is to find ways to accomplish this through sensible initiatives that build upon our historic foundation, creating a legacy for years to come. Today we continue to take actions to make the county activity greener and expand this activity for the future. In our partnership with local communities, we update our land use codes for better environmental protection. Piece by piece, we see landowners and communities coming together to link and extend the walking trails along the Hudson River. We will open much of the *Dutchess*

Rail Trail across the middle of our county linking our communities together in 2008. We will continue to join state and local governments to purchase development rights on some of our most fertile and beautiful farms. And we continue to transform *Quiet Cove Park*, our riverfront gem, so it can be an integral part of the *Quadricentennial Celebration*.

Our 400 year history since Henry Hudson sailed over the narrows in September of 1609 will provide much to celebrate in 2009. But our most compelling celebration won't be recounting of historical fact, it will be our response to the continuing challenge to honor our heritage through our actions – protecting our ecosystems while maintaining a sustainable economy and improving quality of life to leave behind a legacy for the next generations.



In my State of the County Address last year, I charted a course of action with our bold and visionary “*Dutchess Goes Green*” agenda. We challenged all - individuals, families, businesses, and governments - to change how we think about our environment in order to make Dutchess County more sustainable so future generations can thrive here as have past generations.

“Green” is a way of thinking, causing every activity to be considered. During this past year, Dutchess County Government has certainly been thinking and *behaving* green. We continue to further reduce the road salt used on our County roads, protecting our wildlife habitats and groundwater resources. Efficient fluorescent bulbs light our County facilities, meaning less waste and more energy savings. Alternative fuel vehicles are now part of our County fleet, reducing emissions in our air. Renewable synthetic oil is used in our County fleet; ink cartridges are recycled; green cleaning products are used; recycled paper is purchased. Our waste-to-energy process at our Resource Recovery Plant burns waste cleanly and creates 50 million Kilowatts of electricity annually, enough to provide electricity to thousands of homes. These are just some of the steps we have taken in our ongoing journey to being greener.

Our public education effort continues to produce results. County residents are hearing our message and doing their part as well. Our popular *Hazardous Household Waste Disposal Days* (HHWDD) had a fantastic participation increase of more than 60%! We saw a remarkable increase in the amount of electronic waste being disposed, nearly double from the previous year. Residents are making a concentrated effort to properly and safely dispose household waste and ensure it does not wind up polluting our

environment. I have asked the Resource Recovery Agency to extend our hours of operation in 2008 to make the HHWDD program even more accessible to residents.

And it is not just individuals responding to the green message and doing their part...local businesses, municipalities and other organizations are all doing their part to think and behave green. Look around. This past year, we have seen and heard a clear shift in how business owners are conducting themselves. Our message, along with others, is filtering through our community and helping to inspire people to “think and care more for the environment that sustains us” - an expressed goal in my 2007 State of the County address.

This past fall, we highlighted impressive local green initiatives sponsored by private, public and non-profit entities with the first annual *County Executive’s Green Achievement Awards*. Their combined work was encouraging and uplifting. We are confident we will be equally inspired by this year’s nominations as “green” becomes a routine way of doing business in Dutchess County.

“Green” is an integral part of the way Dutchess County government does business. Last year, I created an internal green workgroup from many County departments. The workgroup is developing a broad spectrum of activities. These activities will enhance the measures we have already implemented over the years to reduce the impact on the environment.



Throughout this report you will read more about the green initiatives happening within County government. In addition, I am announcing my plan to launch our “*Dutchess Goes Green*” website – a central source for residents to find out more about the green activities of County government and learn how they can contribute to the protection of our environment.

Dutchess County is recognized as a leader throughout New York State for our innovation, partnerships and collaborations. Others say – “let’s do it like Dutchess” - and then ask us to share our successful strategies. We have built success by working smarter, always learning from our past as we prepare for the future. We think creatively and maximize partnerships to gain the full value of collaboration. We look for ways to conserve, in order to protect our natural resources as well as our fiscal resources.

County Finances and Fiscal Stewardship

Much like we examine the history of our ecosystem to protect it today and secure it for the future, we also rely on historical data and statistics to help us evaluate and project the economic climate. History also shows us there is an up-and-down nature to our shifting and often unpredictable economy.

County governments can be severely affected by budget and funding decisions of higher levels of government, and must prepare for difficult times as soon as the signs

are visible. We must do what is necessary to minimize the impacts that frequently affect us on the back end of economic hard times.

Today, financial analysts are projecting an unsettling picture of the economy in the coming fiscal year. Declining corporate profits, a downturn on Wall Street, the sub-prime mortgage issues and a decline in consumer spending are cause for concern. The impact of the national economic downturn is already being felt at the state level with lower than expected state revenues and a rising state budget gap projected at \$4.4 billion that must be closed. With less money available to spend on Albany's priorities, the state typically shifts costs to county government, which translates to local property taxpayers.

Despite these serious fiscal concerns, the Governor's recent State of the State address and budget announcement include new spending considerably above inflation. At the same time, the Governor's proposal to close the \$4.4 billion budget gap in part is shifting costs to county governments by requiring county governments to pay costs previously absorbed by the state, including more for social services public assistance, youth detention costs and funding for county highways. Whether the final state budget will include measures to offset the proposed new spending, the transfer of costs to counties, and deal with the impact of the sluggish economy will not be known until the final budget is adopted by the State Legislature months from now. Faced with these looming fiscal uncertainties, several counties across the state, including Dutchess, are proactively taking measures to control spending. Avoiding the reality of existing fiscal challenges and waiting to react too late is not responsible financial stewardship.

State imposed mandates remain a burden, including local costs for the state's mandated Medicaid program – this year requiring more than \$39 million directly from the pockets of local taxpayers. Costs for the mandated preschool children's services are projected to be \$22 million. The Governor's proposed budget includes a growth cap on the county cost for mandated preschool children's services. However, there would be no 2008 savings for Dutchess County. We already successfully hold spending for this program to well below the proposed cap through the effective management and cost saving measures we have put in place and have been implemented by our long time preschool children's services coordinator, Beverly Allyn, who is well known throughout the state.

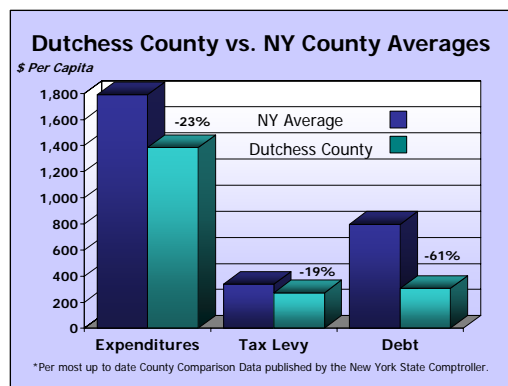
Beyond programmatic state mandates, other non-discretionary costs factor heavily into county spending. State pension costs to fund our employee's retirement, health insurance costs for employees and their families, and workers compensation combined total nearly \$34 million in 2008. Energy costs for county government are estimated at a startling \$4.5 million as we continue to be impacted by the same costs families and local businesses are facing.

Through prudent fiscal management and working smarter, Dutchess County has fared better than most counties, and we continue to accomplish this with fewer employees today than in 1992 when I took office. We have been able to control costs locally

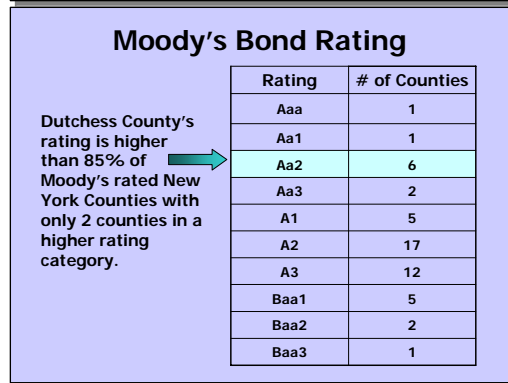
through restructuring, use of technology, and by fostering collaborative partnerships with community agencies and local businesses. Two concrete examples are in our Department of Social Services where our Special Investigation Unit diverted more than \$11 million in recipient fraud in 2007 and accounting business practices were improved to recover money owed the County, resulting in \$2 million during 2007. Focusing on program outcomes and evidence based practices, we've been able to insure we are providing the best and most cost effective services for taxpayers' dollars.

We have a new four-year agreement with the DCSEA Corrections Officers, bringing greater fiscal predictability with all three employee union agreements in place. My goal is always to acknowledge and reward our employees for the outstanding service they provide while recognizing taxpayer realities.

A few facts highlight our budgetary and financial stewardship and successes. The 2008 budget of \$394 million reflects a mere 1.7% increase in spending year over year, well below inflation. The county property tax rate of \$2.29 per \$1,000 of full market value is a decline of 11% from 2007.



Dutchess County government taxes its residents 19% less per capita and spends 23% less per capita than the statewide county average. Only two counties statewide are higher than our Aa2 bond rating. Our indebtedness per capita is an impressive 61% below the statewide county average.



All of these factors bode well in our efforts to sustain and expand Dutchess County's economic infrastructure, both businesses and workers. We will continue our strong support and healthy investment in the professionals and committed volunteers who advance the County's economic development, jobs creation, as well as the needs of our workers.

The Dutchess County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) has assisted over 500 businesses in the past year. New jobs for the families of the County added just by the businesses EDC worked with numbered 280. In 2007, more than \$200 million was invested by small businesses and \$400 million by large businesses.

In this era of global competition, business and jobs retention must be a major focal point. Staff assisted several local businesses in securing over \$260,000 in grants to improve their operations and to market their products, and provided technical assistance and business counseling to over 100 businesses. In recognition of the

significance of not-for-profit employers in the health of Dutchess County's economy, EDC, as an administrative arm to the Industrial Development Agency, assisted several not-for-profits with expansion projects, and bonding and funding for capital construction projects.

Several new commercial construction projects are in progress or nearing completion. All across the county, from Poughkeepsie and Hyde Park, south to Beacon, and in the east and northeast corridor of Route 22 in the towns of Pawling and Amenia, these projects will provide new jobs and commerce that will benefit local economies as well as the larger county and regional economy.

Our focus remains on our "human" infrastructure as well. Dutchess County's *Workforce Investment Board* provided employment and training assistance to adults, dislocated workers, and our youth populations. Specific career training was given to 165 adults. Over 60% of those seeking employment were employed as a direct result of services provided, and over 80% of the above retained their position with their new company.

With the objective of ensuring future employability and teaching the skills to benefit businesses, over 60 "at risk" out of school youth were provided career guidance and training. Summer employment and a college experience was also provided to over 100 young people through a summer youth employment program funded by the County's Department of Social Services. Nearly 70% of youth entering the programs were gainfully employed as a result of the training and job placement services. These investments not only benefit the individuals, but the future of the community as well.

Tourism is an industry of prominent presence in our community. Our investment over the years in the development of Tourism's website has helped generate over 660,000 online visits to Dutchess. In 2006 (most current information available), direct spending by visitors to the County was estimated at \$466 million, and supports the many tourism-related businesses and employees in the County. With our many cultural and historical attractions, and our Agri-tourism emphasis, we attract over 4 million visitors annually. With Tourism's leadership and marketing capabilities, we can look forward to a spectacular 2009 *Quadricentennial Celebration* - another opportunity to introduce many first time visitors who will want to return again and again to our beautiful county, adding economic rewards to our overall economy at the same time.

Through strong, sustained fiscal stewardship and strategic multi-year planning in county government, we have successfully maintained our financial position. Through strong, sustained partnerships and carefully crafted investments with external agencies, we have successfully maintained our business and jobs-generating community. However, the economic



challenges we are facing at the national and state level will undoubtedly impact our local economy as well. As we have in the past, we must continue to plan and prepare to the extent we can for the uncertain fiscal outcomes that lie ahead.

Advancing Our Priorities, Capturing Our History Through Technology

Over the past several years, our county workforce, led by the efforts of our Office of Computer Information Services (OCIS) has been working smarter and *greener* by using technology to increase productivity and make information more accessible to the public.

Development of new software applications and enhancements to our website, *Dutchess County Online*, have helped to make Dutchess County one of the top ten digitally advanced counties in the nation for the fourth consecutive year. Congratulations to OCIS!

We have been successful at blending and integrating technology, training and fostering the correct skill sets of resources. For example, in the Office of Probation and Community Corrections, we have completed departmental restructuring by matching skills to needed focus areas and targeting interventions with the appropriate personnel in order to achieve desired outcomes. This has resulted in substantial productivity improvements and more effective case load assignments. In 2008, we will implement the use of *Robocuff*, an automated communication system which will help track and monitor supervised youth reducing detention and placement for even more efficiency.

We are using technology to protect our community. In 2008, the implementation of a \$2.65 million major *Criminal Justice System* module will greatly enrich the data available to multiple departments including Probation, District Attorney, Public Defender, Jail and the Sheriff. This integrated database is an investment that will provide expanded access to other law enforcement agencies and remotely to vehicles resulting in productivity and improved safety for both residents and employees. *Live Scan* fingerprinting is being provided to improve productivity for the Sheriff's Department by making suspect data available in 45 minutes as opposed to weeks. Cross functional data from all of the criminal justice departments will be available to all departments in 2008 improving the effectiveness of law enforcement related professionals while providing a greater level of public safety for the families of our county.

Our county website, www.dutchessny.gov, allows residents to access information and interact with county departments in a quick, easy and cost effective manner. Users now have the ability to access indexes of land and legal filings including mortgages, deeds, clerk minutes, foreclosure actions, judgments, tax liens, delinquencies and sales from the County Clerk's office from the comfort of home or office.

I am pleased to announce that in 2008, we will unveil new enhancements to our popular *Parcel Access* application that allows users to view map-based information and property assessments, built upon our GPS based information system. These new enhancements will integrate information and tools suggested by business and community users to

improve search capabilities of residential and commercial properties. Collaborative efforts with town assessors have enabled the inclusion of digital photos of properties. And you can truly see the past and the future come together as you use our modern website to view historical filed maps of parcels, dating back to the 1800's.

Just as we continue to use technology to work smarter, we are making infrastructure investments so we can work greener as we provide critical services and programs to our residents. Dutchess County government is building upon its green commitment with three major geothermal pump system projects currently underway or about to begin. Geo-thermal heating and cooling is an efficient way to condition a building, resulting in substantial energy savings and a reduced dependence on non-renewable fossil fuels.

The *Eastern Dutchess Government Center* in Millbrook will provide many services throughout central and eastern Dutchess County, reducing the need for residents to drive to Poughkeepsie. Not only will we save our residents time and gas, we will see savings of approximately \$35,000 per year with the geo-thermal pump system. That along with other green building features will help the Eastern Dutchess Government Center achieve LEED Silver Certification standards.

This year, we will begin work to renovate and expand at the County's outdated *Highway Complex*. Again, we will pursue geo-thermal heating and cooling and strive to meet LEED standards in the construction. The project has already resulted in ecological benefits thanks to modification of our truck wash station, preventing salt run-off into the nearby creek.

We recently broke ground on Phase One of the *E-911 Campus Master Plan* featuring an expanded *Emergency Operations Center (EOC)*. This project will also feature a geo-thermal heating and cooling system and provide energy savings of up to \$80,000 per year. Dutchess County is blessed with volunteer and professional first responders who have dedicated themselves to ensuring the safety of our families. We are committed to strengthening their resources and providing them the tools they need to do their job safely and efficiently. This project will provide a *Command and Control Center* to enhance our ability to respond and organize the resources necessary during a disaster or large scale event. It will also provide a modern training center allowing better classroom teaching and distance learning. Our investment to protect the families of Dutchess County will also help protect our environment.

Also in 2008, we begin operation of our new *Simulcast Radio Dispatch System* to ensure accurate, timely and unified communication dispatching to our emergency responders throughout the entire county. Again demonstrating Dutchess County is among state leaders, we will be one of the first counties in New York State to install this state-of-the-art technology.

Both the Simulcast system and the Emergency Operation Center project have been the culmination of a collaborative effort to define the training, resource and coordination needs of fire, EMS and police forces within the county. We have built a solid foundation

in the relationships forged over the years and through the emergencies faced together. Again, we respect the wisdom learned from past experience and make the right investments to take us into the future.

Sustainable, Healthy Living

Sustainable living is healthy living. If we are to improve quality of life, we must improve the opportunities to access our environment and our environs. I'm pleased to announce that in the fall, we will host a conference which makes this connection. This conference will provide the opportunity for local municipal officials, planning representatives, and environmental and community volunteers to focus attention on *Livable Communities*



beyond the framework of smart growth and energy savings. We will be linking sustainable *green* issues to public health prevention with a focus on walkable, bicycle friendly communities with safe and attractive pathways, as well as planning for the needs of our aging population to stay within their home communities. Just spend a few minutes contemplating the needs of our youth and elderly residents. Walking and exercise are key ingredients to good health. Dutchess County

is consciously working toward the goal of improving these opportunities in 2008 and beyond. The conference will be a collaboration of our Departments of Health, Planning and Development, Aging and the Health & Human Services Cabinet.

Leading up to this conference, I have directed our Office for the Aging to schedule and conduct meetings with municipal leaders to focus on needs of seniors as communities plan for the future. We want to encourage localities, in their planning and zoning requirements, to foster walkable, mixed use and transit friendly communities, making them places where current seniors and baby boomers may age in place.

We already provide a wide range of services to seniors from home delivered meals and senior centers to transportation and home care designed to assist them in living independently. Award winning programs such as our *Senior Exercise Programs* and our new *Brain Games* program offer a unique service to thousands by combining physical and mental exercise with a fun opportunity for social enrichment.

Last year, our Office for the Aging, along with its counterparts statewide, officially rolled out *Dutchess NY Connects*, a single point of entry to long term care services. This represents a transition from the former "CASA" with a greater emphasis on information and referral for those entering the long term care system and their caregivers. This division also provides needed in-home services to many chronically ill and disabled individuals who are not seniors.

Important to allowing seniors to remain in their home settings are their caregivers, those who are providing care and support to our seniors everyday. Last year, we held our

first ever caregivers conference, and it was an overwhelming success. We will continue to support caregivers in 2008.

Critical to *Sustainable Living* is access and transportation. In 2008, we will work to move forward on many of the recommendations contained in our recently completed Senior Transportation Study. Dial-A-Ride services will see improvements, including implementation of a pilot program in partnership with a municipality to place an aide on a Dial-A-Ride route, coordination among senior transportation providers and research on suitable transportation models to meet the future needs of our growing senior population.

While we work to create more walkable communities and build wonderful trails throughout our county to offer the ultimate in green transportation, we must also work to improve our traditional transportation sources including our County LOOP bus system. We want to provide a quality transportation system to our residents while striving to minimize negative impacts to our environment. In 2007, I directed we use low sulfur fuel in our bus fleet. Presently, we are investigating the potential of using a new fuel source with 20 percent ethanol mixed with the low sulfur diesel oil.

In 2008, we will go further in improving the management and service of our transit program. Later this year, I will use the results of an extensive analysis of our LOOP program to improve service delivery. While results are not complete, they will entail a simplification of our route structure, realignment of routes which are no longer productive, expansion of headways in our most productive corridors and a likely expansion of our Dial-a-Ride activity.

In an effort to upgrade the LOOP system, numerous improvements are scheduled. This year, LOOP will benefit from new buses, additional mechanics, more user-friendly fare boxes, simpler and better schedules and extended hours where necessary.

We are dedicated to protecting and promoting the health of this County's residents. In 2008, we will continue to enhance our ability to respond to emergencies, promote and encourage healthy behaviors, and protect our environment and our residents' health. We will continue with our *Dutchess County Comprehensive Cancer Control Planning* initiative I launched in September 2006 with Health Commissioner Dr. Michael Caldwell to develop strategies to reduce the burden of cancer by reducing service gaps and encouraging partnerships between organizations working on cancer. We assembled local stakeholders to form a *Comprehensive Cancer Control Consortium*. Last year, a needs assessment was conducted of cancer prevention, screening, treatment, and support services in Dutchess County in order to form the basis for development of a *Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan*. In 2008, the Consortium will work with community partners to identify key areas of interest and develop strategies to work toward eliminating barriers to cancer prevention, care and successful survivorship. Mini grants will be implemented to enhance public awareness and encourage partnering between organizations involved in cancer services.

Last September, we launched the *Dutchess County HEART Safe Community Program*, the first county-based program to recognize and honor the efforts of municipalities, businesses, educational institutions and other community organizations who have taken steps to save the lives of sudden cardiac arrest victims through cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and increased public access to defibrillation devices. In February, we will honor the first recipients of a bronze, silver or gold **HEART Safe** designation. We appreciate the partnership and collaboration of the American Heart Association, Alamo EMS, and others who supported the Department of Health in the efforts to develop local criteria for community applications and improving chances of survival for heart attack victims outside the hospital setting.

Since 2000, my *Children's Health Initiative (CHI)* has funded programs to enhance the well-being of our county youth. A portion of the funding has been targeted to programs that attack the causes of childhood obesity. In addition to physical fitness & nutrition education, six childhood obesity prevention programs offered activities such as running marathons, dancing, gardening, cooking and filming counter marketing commercials. The successful results showed an increased knowledge of healthy food choices and nutritious eating as well as knowledge of the importance and value of physical fitness. A number of youth also gained an understanding of media literacy in relation to childhood obesity. About 1,200 youth and 260 adults participated in the various programs. The administration will continue this emphasis in 2008.

Sustainable Living must include services to meet the needs of working families. Our *Mentoring Program* with the Chambers of Commerce continues to thrive with 106 active participants including both Temporary Assistance recipients and individuals at or below 200% of the poverty level. The goal of this program is to assist individuals in retaining jobs; however they have also been instrumental in assisting individuals in obtaining employment and advancing in their careers.

We continue to be able to immediately meet day care needs of those whose income is below 200% of the poverty level, and we offer after hours appointments for services in Poughkeepsie and Dover Plains for anyone who cannot come in during our regular hours due to work schedules.

Dutchess has a highly successful *Community Solutions for Transportation (CST)* program that has been recognized numerous times by others. Last year, we purchased 40 vehicles for needy individuals through this *Wheels to Work* program. Assistance is provided with car repairs, car insurance, defensive driving classes, drivers education classes, bus tokens, car maintenance instruction, and car registration and licensing fees. Approximately 33 job placements and 44 jobs were retained as a result of the services provided by this program in 2007. This is just one more example of our initiatives changing the lives of families.

In a new endeavor in 2008, I am announcing we will host a program at Social Services in February to assist people who are entitled to the Federal and State Earned Income Tax Credits to have their tax returns prepared free, thereby helping maximize the

amount of the credit for persons who earn below \$35,000 a year. This will put more cash into family budgets of those most in need.

Our Mental Hygiene HELPLINE service, accessed by telephone and offered on the Mid-Hudson Bridge since 1982, is now answering calls from individuals in distress from an additional four bridges spanning the Hudson River. This cooperative effort with the New York State Bridge Authority has already resulted in calls from the Newburgh/Beacon Bridge, and we are confident it will continue to save lives.

In 2008, the Department of Mental Hygiene will focus on creating a treatment environment that supports physical as well as emotional wellness. We will use evidence based treatment models to support healthy, sustainable lifestyle changes.

Our Mental Health Juvenile Justice (MH/JJ) Diversion Project was awarded a "Model Program" enhancement to our existing five year state grant. This project has been awarded over \$200,000 in funding for 2008, renewable for up to five years. Since 2002, over 90% of its participants have been diverted from state placement. Outcomes closely tracked through the Marist College Office of Community Research, a partner in the project, demonstrated Dutchess County has consistently outpaced similar programs in other counties in reducing risk and enhancing protective factors for youth and families involved in this project.

To sustain livable opportunities for our young people in the future, Dutchess County continues to provide youth leadership opportunities. With the support of the Youth Board, the Youth Council members are responsible for the proposal and allocation process of the 2008 Mini Youth Asset grants to promote the Developmental Assets of positive values with youth as decision-makers. We actively participated in the first 2007 Youth Festival highlighting Developmental Assets organized by the DC Agricultural Society at the Rhinebeck Fairgrounds. For 2008, the event will be regional as the Hudson Valley Youth Festival. The staff also successfully led the 2007 Children's Service Council's *Why Can't We all Get Along* conference serving 250 youth and adults to address the issues of violence, aggression, bullying and gangs.

During 2008, we will continue my \$115,000 *Youth Gang Prevention Initiative*. Last year four different programs served 50 youth. Three community trainings were held in conjunction with the NYS School Resource Officers curriculum, the NYS Police and a consultant knowledgeable on evidenced-based research and best practices for gang prevention.

We will continue to strengthen our "*Dutchess County Government Cares*" outreach efforts to veterans which have already produced an increase of 40% in contacts and services rendered to military personnel, veterans and their families since 2006. This has been a result of our coordinated public outreach efforts and increased staff participation in the community at Department of Labor Veterans seminars; our Senior Picnics; local Community Day celebrations; nursing home visits; working with our local

National Guard Unit; and importantly our bi-monthly visits to the Pine Plains VA Clinic and Beacon Satellite Office.



This past summer as County Executive, together with county staff, family and friends waving flags and cheering, we proudly celebrated the return and homecoming of our 727th Military Police Detachment of the New York National Guard from Operation Iraqi Freedom. Our second November *Dutchess County Veterans Appreciation Day* was attended by over 400 military personnel, veterans and family members, and over 30 participating federal, state, local government agencies and veterans' organizations to provide information.

During the event, I presented six veterans and one widow of a veteran with long overdue medals, ribbons and badges. Based on comments from both our veteran's community and organizations present, this event was a huge success. This has now become an annual event so be sure to save Saturday, November 8, 2008 for our 3rd annual event at the Wallace Center at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Home.



I take this opportunity for special recognition of our Veterans Service Agency Director Nelson Eddy Rivera who has shown a dedication and personal commitment to our veterans and families who are so worthy of this intensive effort.

Finally, our organizational efforts to integrate and coordinate health and human service activities is truly bearing fruit and showing early signs of success. We meet regularly in a "cabinet" structure with these departments to do cross system planning, evaluate state and federal changes, update each other on budget initiatives, share information on best practices, and develop strategies to maximize the county's resources. This is just one more example of the proactive management which allows county government to operate leaner and more efficiently.

The strong relationships and collaborative spirit of these departments was well demonstrated when I directed the group to form a *DC Public Outreach Interdepartmental Team* in response to the devastating 2007 spring floods. The team successfully implemented six community meetings reaching more than 200 people, facilitating FEMA assistance and other available county services to get them back on their feet.

Also, working with local mayors and town supervisors, we facilitated the county's successful application to the *NYS Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness*

Commission for technical assistance for the proposed Shared Courts Facilities Initiative to benefit the Towns and property taxpayers of Beekman, LaGrange, and Pleasant Valley.

Smart and Sustainable Community Growth

To sustain our communities we must remain focused on housing availability for all those who work in and for our communities, our schools and our businesses. Dutchess is working regionally with Orange and Ulster Counties and the Dyson Foundation to determine future housing needs by income strata to support the regional economy of the future. Preliminary results are now under review. Later this year, I will invite municipal leaders to review results and assist me in determining their usefulness in local decision-making. The goal is to make Dutchess County housing opportunities available to a diverse cross-section of our residents.

This past year we supported the creation of 72 additional units to our existing affordable housing inventory. One of the most public and satisfying endeavors by the County involved its cooperation with Red Hook and the State of New York in the creation of 48 senior units on a former brownfields site, now known as *Red Hook Commons*. The site transformation is profound. It is now reclaimed as a “clean and green” site and offers a prime example of how cooperative housing strategies can provide a better housing balance within our County.



Our promotion of smart growth strategies have been recognized throughout New York. With the town of Washington joining in 2007, 29 of our 30 municipalities are now Greenway communities. Many local communities are following our example as Greenway Compact members. Overall, this is a strategy to keep our rural areas free from sprawled development and to concentrate future development in about 75-80 “priority growth areas” within the County. In 2008, we will intensify our work in many localities to promote zoning and subdivision regulation changes to better achieve smart growth goals together. The core of this activity will be preparation of centers and greenspace maps, reviewed and accepted at the local level, as guides to future zoning and review efforts.



We continue to take action on farmland preservation. In recent weeks, *Pleasant View Farm*, a beautiful and productive 256-acre farm in northeastern Dutchess County, has been formally added to the County’s growing list of properties which will limit development. To date, Dutchess County has invested almost \$4.2 million on 12

completed open space and farmland protection projects with a total value of \$12.3 million – an impressive two to one return on each County dollar.

I also am pleased to announce later this year, I will be submitting an open space bond of up to \$2.5 million to the County Legislature to complete several more closings and pending projects currently in the pipeline and anticipated in 2008. Once these projects are completed, the County will have protected almost 3,000 acres of invaluable resources with a total dollar value of nearly \$23 million. Our total investment of \$6.5 million will have leveraged public and private funding totaling more than \$16 million, or 72 percent of the total of our acquisitions.

This total includes \$6.4 million from State grants, private sector funding of \$4.5 million and local municipal funding of \$5.2 million. My original vision to save open space was it had to be a partnership with local governments. I'm grateful local towns are joining the County and State to support this vision for open space preservation.

Increasingly, conservation easements are an effective alternative to underwrite our extensive smart growth initiative in Dutchess County. For example, the *Dutchess Land Conservancy*, an independent non-profit corporation, has placed over 27,000 acres under easement in the past 20 years. This is a remarkable achievement.

Therefore, I want to announce a major new initiative to expand this laudable work. The County is working with the *Northern Dutchess Alliance*, land conservancies, local governmental units and New York State to expand opportunities for conservation easements. As towns improve on their ability to achieve "smart growth" land development plans, they are faced with the challenge of what to do with managing saved open space. I have included money in the 2008 budget to implement an acceptable and efficient management approach using available resources. It will be a benefit to local governmental units that want the required open space but not the burden of monitoring it on a long-term basis.

My administration connects our green initiatives with an ever-improving quality of life in Dutchess County. In 2007, our Department of Planning and Development joined with the Environmental Management Council to initiate a new and improved Natural Resources Inventory. Also, we are augmenting our environmental data capability by mapping some 2,500 "sub watersheds," plotting direction of drainage flow and locating all structures in the County as well as contours mapped at five-foot intervals for every town within the County. This data will be provided as a county service to all municipalities and eventually accessible to the public at large.

We continue an active water management program, and facilitate quarterly management meetings involving the Water and Wastewater Authority, the Soil and Water Conservation District, the Environmental Management Council and Cornell Cooperative Extension. We continue to track aquifer and precipitation levels at stations in scattered locations throughout the county to examine, with the help of a consultant, aquifer recharge rates and safe fields for groundwater that assists in monitoring and

managing drought events. In 2007, we held related workshops for local officials, and continued our important and original work in determining appropriate development densities that will protect groundwater supplies.

As a new component to our groundwater monitoring and protection strategies, the Health Department's Environmental Services Division initiated and progressed the first phase of our volunteer program designed to test the quality of randomly selected private wells in homes throughout Dutchess County. A report will be issued on the results of this phase of the program once completed, and we will move immediately into phases two and three during the course of 2008.

Just as land use is a cooperative vision in Dutchess County, so too is our work in park improvements and trails. We are fortunate to have a diverse County parks system, offering a recreational bounty for our residents. *Bowdoin Park* welcomes tens of thousands of residents each year who delight in its 300 plus acres. In 2008, park visitors can look forward to the addition of a new pavilion overlooking the Hudson River which will house our Naturalist education program. In addition, we will offer fun new opportunities for physical fitness for our youngsters with the installation of a new Climbing Rock and playground equipment replacements. And of course, residents can look forward to our annual summer concerts, a wonderful collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Another gem in the Dutchess County Parks System is *Quiet Cove Park*, our riverfront parcel on the Hudson River in the Town of Poughkeepsie, just north of Marist College.



This New York State/Dutchess County Government cooperative venture is already adding to the quality of life for county residents who have discovered this fantastic access point to the Hudson. I'm pleased to announce this year, we will launch our master development plan and bond to upgrade the park facilities, enhance the river environment through shoreline improvements and restore historic buildings. *Quiet Cove* will also be an ideal location for 2009 *Quadricentennial* activities.

Last year, we began work on the *Dutchess Rail Trail*. Nearly two miles of the trail in East Fishkill are now paved, open and already being used and enjoyed by residents. This eagerly anticipated 12-mile trail, running through the heart of Dutchess County, will feature a cooperative effort among County government and the towns of Poughkeepsie, LaGrange, Wappinger and East Fishkill for maintenance of trail properties. A 4.6 mile stretch of abandoned railroad property currently owned by CSX, which we are aggressively pursuing to add to our trail network, also contains a mile and a quarter link between the new *Dutchess Rail Trail* at Morgan Lake on Creek Road and the *Walkway Over the Hudson* property beginning at Washington Street in the city of Poughkeepsie.

Although an ambitious and daunting time challenge, we are committed in our efforts to make the connection between these trails and the *Walkway Over the Hudson* in time for the *Quadricentennial Celebration* in 2009.

Meanwhile, our plans progress for the Phase IV extension of the *Harlem Valley Rail Trail*, connecting Millerton to Columbia County, making a popular County asset even more attractive as a recreational, tourist and economic asset. Although requiring considerable ecological study and extensive coordination with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), this part of our trail will be the most scenic section developed. Phase IV will complete a key link in the HVRT, connecting northeastern Dutchess County to Columbia County and state trails, creating a 23 mile linear park that will extend north all the way to Copake Falls.

Last year, Dutchess County received the prestigious *Preserve America Community* designation, recognizing our continued efforts to preserve the rich historic heritage of our county. As a *Preserve America Community*, we are now eligible for competitive, matching grants to help protect our county's natural beauty and honor its history. I'm very excited to announce a new initiative that we believe will add a terrific educational amenity to our trails. I have asked our County Historian to pursue grant opportunities to work with local municipalities and their individual historians to develop local "history stations" along our *new Dutchess Rail Trail as well as our Harlem Valley Rail Trail*. We envision these stations being incorporated into local school's social studies programs, so we can teach our future generations about our rich natural history while out enjoying our wonderful trails.

In our forever quest to improve and enhance Dutchess County for our residents and businesses, we must continually look to refine and sharpen our knowledge and understanding of them. We are currently gearing up for the Census of 2010. We will be working cooperatively town by town, through the Department of Planning and Development, to make sure Census figures are as accurate as possible throughout the County. This base data, along with our Geographic Information System (GIS) and economic data, provides the foundation of our ability to understand our County, its needs and its trends. We already know the changing demographics, particularly as they relate to a surge in the aging population, will have an effect on us all.

As described, we quietly, steadily do our jobs in fulfillment of our collective vision. In Dutchess, we are fortunate that the County Executive and the County Legislature generally share a vision of an environmentally friendly and economically prosperous future. So a vision, step by step, gets translated into improved opportunities for our residents, and a better quality of life.

In rare moments, we get a chance to look back, sometimes centuries back in our history, to take measure. When we do, we see the building of a legacy. I want that legacy to match our vision. I want it to be a legacy of prosperous, protected rural areas

and vital, well-planned settlements within this environmentally secure backdrop of natural and cultivated open spaces. I ask all residents to consider our collective legacy, to think about what we've inherited and what we will pass on.

As we plan in 2008 for the *Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial*, 400 years since Henry Hudson's voyage up the Hudson River, we recognize and acknowledge our forefathers for their vision and governance which laid the foundation for our future.

Finally, I look forward to walking across the *Walkway Over the Hudson* in 2009 to join hands with and welcome our neighbor Ulster County, as they too embark upon a form of government similar to ours in Dutchess, and wish them success in their journey into the future.

God Bless our men and women in the military who volunteer to serve us and Our County.

Thank you.

William R. Steinhaus
Dutchess County Executive
January 25, 2008