



Orange County Government  
Office of County Executive Steven M. Neuhaus  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Orange County to host presentation on Dutchess County Executive  
Marc Molinaro’s “ThinkDIFFERENTLY” initiative on September 20th**

*Program encourages community development to expand access to children and  
families living with special needs*

Goshen, N.Y. – County Executive Steven M. Neuhaus will host Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro for a presentation of his “ThinkDIFFERENTLY” initiative at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>.

The presentation is open to the public and will take place in the County’s Emergency Services Center auditorium, located at 22 Wells Farm Road in Goshen.

“I look forward to welcoming my friend and colleague Marcus Molinaro to Orange County,” Neuhaus said. “County Executive Molinaro is no stranger to breaking down barriers for all people and the ‘ThinkDIFFERENTLY’ initiative is representative of his entire career. He has always been an innovator and, as a leader, he has a fresh and clear vision for Dutchess County. I fully support this initiative to be inclusive of all individuals regardless of the challenges they may face.”

Through its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, Orange County has supported accessibility initiatives by funding ADA projects at Tommie McDuffie Park in Blooming Grove, the Village Park in Cornwall, Brook Lake Park in Town of Highlands, Benedict Park in the Town of Montgomery and the Winslow Therapeutic Riding Center in the Town of Warwick.

“I look forward to joining County Executive Molinaro on Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> when he will highlight opportunities for Orange County to think differently about our friends and neighbors.”

The father of three children, including a daughter who is on the autism spectrum, Molinaro introduced his “ThinkDIFFERENTLY” initiative to Dutchess County in early 2015. Since then, Dutchess County has offered supportive training, encouraged community development to expand accessibility, and held events for children and families living with special needs. “ThinkDIFFERENTLY” is Molinaro’s call to action for local residents, organizations and businesses to re-think the ways they relate to residents with special needs.

“I’ve been overwhelmed 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 challenge to change hearts and minds,” Molinaro said. “Every individual of every ability deserves a community that welcomes them and supports their hopes and dreams. I thank County Executive Neuhaus for his interest in our initiative, and I hope Orange County will join our efforts to ‘ThinkDIFFERENTLY’ about all residents.”

Through its CDBG program, Dutchess County has funded numerous projects in local municipalities that improve access to facilities and resources. Projects include Julie’s Jungle, a 4,000 square-foot regional handicapped accessible playground with specialized equipment such as ramps, a rubberized surface, short stair height, Braille play panels and sensory garden amps enabling children with physical, visual, hearing and cognitive disorders to play and Wappinger’s Challenger Field, a handicapped accessible baseball field where disabled youth ages 5 to 18 can participate without obstacles, thanks to smaller, synthetic infield, as well as handicapped accessible dugouts, parking and restroom facilities.

Molinaro has also hosted movie days for special needs families and service providers, which included lowering the sound and raising the lights in the theater to accommodate children with sensory issues, and the annual Dutchess County Picnic for Children with Special Needs, which was held on August 15th. He has spoken about the “ThinkDIFFERENTLY” initiative across the state, encouraging every city, town and village in New York to consider adopting resolutions that

promote supportive environments for residents of all abilities. More than 60 communities to date have passed “Think DIFFERENTLY” resolutions.

More information about Dutchess County’s “Think DIFFERENTLY” initiative is available at [dutchessny.gov/thinkdifferently](http://dutchessny.gov/thinkdifferently).



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