

Good evening and welcome to the world-renowned Strong National Museum of Play. Many thanks to all of the elected and community leaders who have joined us. And thank you also to those of you watching from home.

For those on Twitter, I encourage you to follow my account @Maggie_Brooks or #SOTC2014. We will be sharing highlights of the address tonight and fun enhancements to the speech that you won't see anywhere else. And yes, that includes the Bernstein Bear selfie we just took here on stage.

Thank you Rollie Adams. This is my 10th State of the County address and I am grateful for your hospitality. Like so many of the iconic assets we have in Monroe County, the story of The Strong is a story that mirrors Rochester's own. It's a story of community and giving back. And it's a story that's as much about the people behind the institution as the institution itself.

Margaret Woodbury was fortunate. Born in 1897, she was the only child of an admittedly wealthy family. As early investors in a small start-up firm called Eastman Kodak Company, the Woodbury's had the means to travel the world with their young daughter.

Hawaii, Japan, China, and Sri Lanka, Margaret visited them all and on those trips took a great deal of pride in collecting souvenirs, mainly small trinkets and dolls.

Margaret continued collecting even after her marriage to Homer Strong, a local attorney, at the age of 23. And, by the 1960s, her collection included more than 27,000 dolls and countless toys. She died in 1969, but as part of her legacy, Margaret wanted her entire collection displayed in a museum. 13 years later the Strong Museum opened its doors to the public on this very site in downtown Rochester.

Today, the Strong is one of the region's most popular cultural attractions. This 282,000 square-foot facility is a destination for fun that speaks to the playfulness in all of us. But the Strong also captures Rochester's historic spirit of innovation, creativity, technology, and education.

As County Executive, I appreciate the importance of the 560,000 visits made to the Strong each year. As a grandmother to Aidan and Jake, two little boys under the age of 3, I understand the importance of the lifelong memories so often created within these walls.

Every day in Monroe County families visit a museum, see a play, attend a sporting event, a concert, or enjoy our incredible philharmonic orchestra.

Every day in Monroe County people have access to our extensive parks system, our beaches, our natural resources, and our wide array of cultural festivals.

Every day in Monroe County thousands of students walk through the doors of our 19 colleges and universities, charting a path to a career and success.

Every day in Monroe County an entrepreneur launches an idea, a company delivers a new product, and companies small and large take risks so our community can reap the benefits of new jobs.

My role as County Executive is to work hard each day to keep the state of County government strong, to protect taxpayers and our world-class quality of life.

A decade ago our property tax rate was higher, our county workforce was larger. We were duplicating service more and consolidating service less. We were cutting services instead of thinking out of the box to find innovative ways to maintain our quality of life. And we were working in isolation as a government when it came to creating jobs and growing our economy.

My role as County Executive is to work hard each day to keep the state of our county government strong. Keeping the state of our community strong is the job of us all.

Ten years ago, our local economy was still largely dependent on a handful of big-box manufacturers. The “Big Three” – Kodak, Xerox, and Bausch & Lomb – employed roughly 55,000 local workers. But a decade later, our focus has changed and total local employment at those three companies has dipped under 11,000.

44,000 good paying jobs lost over ten years’ time. This community was facing a potential crisis in our local economy. This community was facing the potential for a staggering unemployment rate of 15%. This community was facing a true threat to our quality of life.

But this community made a decision to work together, to join public and private forces in a productive strategy to identify and target new growth and new opportunities in industries like optics, healthcare, education, food and beverage, alternative energy, agriculture, and advanced manufacturing. We recognize that small companies are now fueling our local workforce. And many of our local start-up companies are led by entrepreneurs who took the knowledge and expertise gained at larger firms to launch their own successful businesses.

The result: 367,000 jobs in Monroe County today. Our unemployment rate of 7% is one of the most stable in the State and below the national average.

The County is doing its part and we recently reached a benchmark I am proud to announce here tonight.

Through our tool-belt of economic development programs and initiatives, the County has now helped to create or retain over 100,000 jobs in our community since I took office in 2004.

100,000 jobs in just 10 years. That’s nearly one third of all jobs in our community today and that’s the best proof yet that our economy is on the fast track to prosperity.

Most often, the County is part of a greater team effort with strong partners like Greater Rochester Enterprise, Empire State Development, and the Rochester Business Alliance. Other times, we work to support local employers alongside our government partners at the City, town, and school district level.

Unfortunately some choose to portray efforts to promote job creation and local investment as “giving away tax dollars” with no conditions or accountability. Misinformation would have you believe we let new or growing companies off the hook for paying taxes at all.

Tonight let me share some facts that tell the real story.

Over the last 10 years, one of Monroe County’s strongest economic development tools, COMIDA, has provided \$221,000,000 in incentives to companies. The benefit to the community is \$865,000,000. That’s a 4 to 1 return on investment and one of the best rates of return in the State.

Almost 15,000 new jobs were created, more than 18,000 construction jobs were created, and an additional \$261,000,000 in property tax revenue was generated for this community.

New revenue for local governments means reduced burden for local taxpayers. Taking a dormant property and returning it to the tax rolls means reduced burden for local taxpayers. COMIDA-supported projects do both.

The Culver Road Armory project represents a \$20,000,000 private investment. Before the project the parcel was not producing any property taxes at all. Now it will generate \$557,000 in property taxes for Monroe County and the City of Rochester.

American Tire Distributors combined a \$6,700,000 private investment with IDA incentives and it will boost the amount of property taxes generated at their site in Chili by \$1,500,000.

College Town is a transformational project on Mount Hope Avenue. \$80,000,000 in private investment means City properties that were once vacant and not generating any tax revenue at all will now generate almost \$18,000,000.

And CityGate investors are spending \$130,000,000 to develop the former Iola campus, a site previously owned by the County. You’ve all heard about the arrival of COSTCO by now, but when the site is fully developed a property that generated zero tax revenue will return almost \$26,000,000 to local governments.

It’s worth mentioning that 41% of all IDA supported projects the past ten years have been in the City of Rochester. I would like to take a moment to thank Mayor Lovely Warren for being here tonight and for her incredible leadership in helping to bring COSTCO and several hundred new jobs to our community.

Monroe County's face at the local economic development table for many years and what seems like a zillion meetings has been our Director of Planning and Development, Judy Seil. Judy deserves a great deal of credit for our progress over the past decade and I would like to take the opportunity to thank her tonight for all of her hard work.

100,000 jobs created or retained through Monroe County Economic Development programs and initiatives since 2004. 100,000 is a big number, but all it takes is one, a single job to make a difference. As a community, we can never lose sight of the fact that, for someone who is unemployed or underemployed, one is the only statistic that matters.

Fred Moore represents a story we hear all too often in today's economy. Fred was grateful to be employed, but where his job should have been enhancing his family's future, it was instead hindering their quality of life.

Fred and his wife Mya already had two young children, and with plans for more, space was naturally getting a bit tight at home. However, finding a new place to accommodate a growing family wasn't going to happen. Fred was in an unstable job with a compensation structure that didn't reflect his hard work and desire to get ahead. Fred was chasing the American Dream, but most of the time it felt like he was simply spinning his wheels.

Then, in 2012, a local company called Innovative Solutions came to the COMIDA with a bold plan to expand their facility on Winton Road in the Town of Henrietta. The company is a technology service provider that develops software, network, and web solutions for businesses in upstate New York. The plan was to spend \$70,000 on technology upgrades and to renovate its 1,700 square feet of space.

There was also a plan to add 5 jobs to their 55 member workforce. Innovative Solutions hired Fred as a Systems Engineer.

"Five jobs added" is not the sort of story that grabs headlines or leads the local evening news. But for Fred, that single job gave him the stable career he was looking for, additional benefits, and the means to secure a new home, a larger space for his family.

Fred is here tonight. Congratulations on child number 3. And thank you to Managing Partner Robert Titus and the entire Innovative Solutions team for understanding that one job and one company's commitment to our community makes a difference.

Mastro Graphic Arts is a certified Woman Business Enterprise and produces machine graphics solutions. With the help of strategic COMIDA investments, the company was able to expand and buy new equipment. New equipment led to new jobs.

Corie Heuston is a machinist with the company. Before signing-on at Mastro, Corie had been unemployed. Prior to unemployment, he had been working multiple shifts just to make ends meet.

23 year old Chad Oliver works with Corie as a machining and estimating professional at Mastro. Chad had tried college, but decided it wasn't for him so he pursued a skilled-

trade through a temporary summer job at Mastro. Chad wrote to me and said, “I know working at Mastro Graphic Arts has given me experience and knowledge which has opened up many opportunities for me in my future.”

Chad and Corie came to Mastro through RochesterWorks. Every year, Monroe County works closely with RochesterWorks on its innovative workforce development and job training programs to create jobs and grow our local economy. It’s one of many partnerships that have helped us secure 100,000 jobs since 2004.

For Corie and Chad, their jobs are making a difference and Mastro Graphics’ commitment to our community is making a difference. Let’s thank President Bill Betteridge from Mastro Graphic Arts, Peter Pecor from RochesterWorks, Corie Heuston, and Chad Oliver. They are all here tonight.

100,000 jobs created with Monroe County assistance over the past ten years. You’ve seen tonight why every single job is important and why we aggressively fight for every single opportunity.

Government investments level the playing field in a State where there are far too many barriers to doing business, far too many regulations on employers, and far too much red tape tying-up local jobs. It’s Monroe County’s job to create an environment that helps local employers grow, expand, and overcome those challenges.

Unfortunately there’s a growing pastime locally. Trumpet the exception versus celebrate the rule. Instead of focusing on investment success that drives business success, some choose to single out failure.

The ongoing saga of Medley Center is the lead example.

In 2008, the Town of Irondequoit, as the local taxing entity, asked COMIDA to join the town and the East Irondequoit School District in support of a plan to save the former Irondequoit Mall. The mall, once a premier shopping destination, was in a state of decline and a new developer had a vision to secure its future and turn what was quickly becoming a liability into an asset for the community. That vision was called Medley Center.

All parties entered into a PILOT agreement, which means payment in lieu of taxes. A PILOT gives a developer the chance to revitalize a site, which may be distressed, and make payments until the property is in a position to generate taxes. This agreement also included several milestone requirements as well, involving additional payments to the school district, town, and county.

Up until this year the owner has made his PILOT payments, so there was no legal authority for COMIDA or anyone else to terminate that agreement.

To say it’s been a frustrating six years for all parties involved is an understatement. And now the developer faces a final deadline to make all payments due, which is May 1st.

The taxpayers of this community have been waiting too long for a return on their investment. Next week I will attend a meeting of the COMIDA Board and ask members to pass two resolutions.

One resolution will rescind the Medley Center PILOT agreement effective May second if the developer does not pay his bill in full on the first of that month.

The second resolution will authorize COMIDA to join the County Law Department in preparing legal action to hold the developer accountable for all monies owed, including PILOT and milestone payments.

This is really an issue that goes beyond one developer and one project. You and I don't have the luxury of missing our tax payments. We don't get a pass when we don't pay our bills. We cannot hold developers or companies to a different standard.

You've heard me say since the day I took office that the only special interest group that matters is the local taxpayer. The situation at Medley Center is no exception.

I do want to mention a Monroe County Economic Development program that underscores the commitment this community and this government have made to the brave men and women who have served this country, or who continue to defend America and all she stands for.

As President Teddy Roosevelt once said, "A man who is good enough to shed his blood for the country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards." In that spirit, last year we launched a program called Helmets to Hardhats, designed to help military men and women transition to civilian life when their tour of duty is over.

It connects returning service members to jobs in the construction industry. We work with two strong partner agencies, the Rochester Building and Construction Trades Council and Unions and Businesses United in Construction, and open doors for veterans so they can put many of the skills they acquired in the military to good use.

The trades organizations provide technical training to veterans, while the County provides a \$1,500 bonus to any veteran who completes certification. If the veteran has already achieved certification and goes on to start a job in that trade, they receive a \$500 bonus.

What a success the program has been so far. In one year's time we have graduated 19 local veterans from the program. Tonight we are joined by Matthew Young a former Marine Reserves Sergeant, and Alexander Chiosa, a former Marine Corps Lance Corporal. These two hometown heroes have received their certification and have become ambassadors to the Helmets to Hardhats Program. They are joined by Ken Warner, Executive Director of UNICON.

Let's thank them all for their service to Monroe County.

The unemployment rate for our newest generation of veterans across this nation is high, at roughly 10%. Helmets to Hardhats is doing its part to help reverse that unsettling trend, but we can do more.

If anyone listening tonight knows a veteran who is struggling with unemployment or underemployment, please feel free to reach out to our Veterans Service Agency in person, by phone, or online at monroecounty.gov. Under the leadership of U.S. Army Veteran Laura Stradley, the County VSA is committed to serving those who have served us by connecting them with the vital support services they deserve and have earned.

In 2013 alone, the VSA attended 78 different veterans outreach events in our community, where they fielded questions on everything from claim applications, to job opportunities, to services available to local veterans.

A common concern: frustrations and challenges when processing claims through the federal office of Veterans Affairs.

This year, Monroe County and the VSA will be establishing a new partnership with the Rochester Health Information Organization to help address that challenge. RHIO is a secure electronic health information exchange that gives authorized medical providers access to test results, lab reports, radiology results, medication history, insurance eligibility, and more.

It's already being used by more than 70 health care organizations and 850,000 patients in our region. By signing on, our VSA will now be able to access a veteran's medical records on-site, which will dramatically reduce the time to apply for and then receive benefits.

Director Stradley is here tonight representing our Veterans Service Agency. Let's give her and her team a hand.

People often ask me, "Why can't you run government like a business?" In many ways we have over the past decade. We've reduced costs and improved efficiencies, and we've focused on our core mission: providing the highest level of service at the lowest cost to taxpayers.

But government does have a unique responsibility to take on the tasks that the private sector can't or won't do. Monroe County government is responsible for services that help our most at-risk neighbors achieve success and self-sufficiency.

So this year our Department of Human Services is re-doubling its efforts to focus on a hand up and not a hand out. You see, Monroe County understands it is possible to improve outcomes and reduce costs at the same time.

After reviewing many of our long-time policies and services it was clear that much of our time was spent helping clients sign-up for public assistance. Helping connect people to services they need is by no means a bad thing. But there is no better way to help clients

help themselves than by connecting them to opportunities to support themselves and their families.

The County recently launched a new initiative called WorkFirst. Working with a local company called Career Systems Development, we provide those who apply for DHS benefits with a direct link to skills and resources needed to find a job. While an application for benefits is being processed, clients are required to attend two job search sessions a week.

If successful, clients feel the pride that comes with employment and independence. That also means reduced burden for an already stressed public assistance system and less cost for taxpayers. And it helps preserve benefits for people who truly need them and have no place else to go. That's because a client, able to work, who does not engage in an honest job search through Career Systems will be denied benefits.

Our Department of Human Services is also focused on targeting fraud, waste, and abuse of our programs and services. In fact, Monroe County is a leader statewide. Last year the County saved almost \$12,000,000 using a Front End Detection System. The system identifies and targets problems at the application stage and keeps people who are not eligible for government assistance out of the system.

Monroe County's Commissioner of Human Services, Kelly Reed, is here tonight and I would like to thank Kelly and her team for WorkFirst, Front End Detection, and their efforts year-round. Let's give them a hand.

Government does have unique responsibilities. We care for the poor and provide a safety net to those who have fallen. We maintain quality of life amenities like parks roads, bridges, and libraries, and we provide important public safety services. And, we do it all while protecting the local taxpayer.

Earlier this year, our ability to protect the public was put to the test. No question it's been a long, hard, cold, and snowy winter in Rochester, but March 12th was something different.

For the first time since 1999 we were facing a blizzard.

We knew it was coming, so we did what we do best in Monroe County. After declaring a state of emergency to encourage our resident to stay off the roads, we activated our centralized Emergency Operations Center on Scottsville Road.

The County joined community stakeholders from police, fire, EMS, utility, and other partner agencies and we remained on-site to monitor mother nature's progress and direct our response. We were pro-active in planning and residents listened when we said it was best to stay home.

So despite the threat and the potential for problems, few accidents were reported, there were few calls to 911, and roadways were cleared and passable for both plows and first-responders to do their work.

It's that type of coordinated emergency response that makes Monroe County unique. In fact our Emergency Operations Center won the Intermedix Corporation's "Rookie of the Year" award for sharing its "WebEOC" software with our public and private partners free of charge.

Public Safety Director Moore and Fred Rion, head of our Office of Emergency Management, are here tonight. Please join me in thanking them, and all of the first responders and plow crews who made the Blizzard of 2014 one *not to remember*.

Coordinated response is really another way of describing collaboration. Collaboration is another way of describing shared services. Collaboration and sharing of services will be critical as governments work harder and harder each year to balance what we need to fund important programs and services and what our taxpayers can afford.

Monroe County is proud of its long-standing commitment to working with our partners at the village, town, City, and school district level to save costs.

But this year Governor Cuomo told Monroe County and every other local government in the State that we aren't doing enough. He says property taxes in New York State are too high and that counties, like Monroe, are the reason why.

We need to help Governor Cuomo understand that local governments are not the reason New York's property taxes are among the highest in the country.

For years, counties have served as an incubator for shared services. Local examples include our 911 Center, our Public Safety Training Facility, our regional Crime Lab, our centralized library system, and our regional Traffic Operations Center. We have a centralized Health department, a joint City/County Youth Bureau. The County delivers civil service programs for the towns and school districts. The Towns provide snow plowing for the County.

As the Chair of the New York State Senate Finance Committee and Syracuse Senator John DeFrancisco said, implementing the Governor's so-called "tax-freeze" would be a "nightmare."

The Council of Governments in Monroe County agrees and I was proud to join members in supporting a resolution opposing the tax freeze proposal. Representatives from the COG are here tonight and deserve a round of applause for their daily efforts to put taxpayers first.

You've heard me say it before so here it comes again: mandates equal high taxes. For ten years I've dedicated myself to fighting for a stable tax rate on behalf of local taxpayers. If Albany were to join us instead of fighting us, we could achieve real property tax reform through real mandate relief. Fix the mandates and you fix New York's property tax problem.

This year 83% of our Monroe County budget will pay for state and federally required services. We don't have a choice, the programs are mandated. As a County we continue to do what we can to provide taxpayers a great return on their investment, but in many cases our State and federal governments make all the rules and then make us pay the bill.

Tonight I'm going to ask you to help me make a point. If you have a gold Monroe County seal on your chair, I'd ask you to stand. Those standing, you represent 17% of the people in this room. 17% of a billion dollar budget is all the money we control in our County budget. 17% of a billion dollar budget is all the money we have to pay for roads, bridges, public safety, and parks, or our support of veterans, seniors, and children and families.

This year, we had to close a \$45,000,000 deficit so our budget was balanced and so we could honor our decade-old commitment to a stable property tax rate. The gap wasn't because of increased costs at our airport or our community hospital. The gap wasn't because of pay raises, or cell phones, or county cars.

It's because of the growing cost and burden of nine State mandated programs that pay for everything from Medicaid to welfare.

I've talked forever about the burden of Medicaid on counties because historically we have been required to pay half of the State's Medicaid bill. To give Governor Cuomo credit, he capped the annual growth of our local share and the State will absorb all growth starting in 2015.

But our County Medicaid bill for 2014 is still \$182,000,000. So tomorrow I will be re-sending a proposal to all members of our local State legislature delegation.

Take the \$1.5 billion the Governor has set aside for rebate checks and use the money to cut each county's Medicaid bill by 44%. Monroe County will be able to reduce its property tax levy by 23%, not a tax freeze but a tax cut. That is true mandate reform and will result in true property tax relief.

Despite the mandate challenge our fiscal record is a strong one. We will continue to honor our commitment to a flat tax rate. Our taxpayer-first approach to budgeting earned Monroe County a credit rating upgrade to "A" status from S&P last year.

County Finance Director Bob Franklin is here representing our Budget team tonight. Bob, job well done.

Counties are nothing if not creative and innovative when it comes to being more efficient and effective. And while we can't always operate government like a business, we can learn a lot from the private sector on doing more with less for taxpayers.

Private companies are more and more helping governments operate and pay for everything from public infrastructure to public water and sewer systems.

Partnerships can be organized in many ways: through agreements, contracts, authorities, or even local development corporations. Some partnerships reflect a sharing of people, equipment, money, or a combination of those things.

But in every case, partnerships allow governments to provide some services by harnessing the innovation of the private sector without additional bureaucracy or cost. Public private partnerships save money for taxpayers.

I truly believe bringing the private sector to the table with government will be a means of doing more with less in the future. Government simply cannot “do it alone” and work in isolation anymore.

And there are many examples of public-private partnerships at work for taxpayers in Monroe County. We’ve talked about some tonight but there are others.

Nurse Family Partnership helps young mothers, Hillside Work Scholarship Connection helps city school students graduate, our subsidized daycare program brings public/private partners together to support low income families. Our prescription discount drug program helps people afford medications.

The private sector brought Monroe County solutions to ensure state of the art technology for our workforce and state of the art communications infrastructure for our first responders.

Working together we can reduce costs and improve services. But it’s critical that we don’t allow concerns about new non-traditional forms of government service delivery to distract from the important work being done and the results being achieved.

So tonight I am announcing the establishment of a new Monroe County Office of Public-Private Accountability. The office will monitor and review any agreement or contract which co-mingles public and private resources, and will provide oversight to any entity engaged in a public/private partnership with the County. This will include any private company, non-governmental entity, or non-profit entity that performs a function for the County or receives tax money through the County.

Shortly, the County will launch a nationwide search for a professional Director of the Office to lead the accountability effort. The Director will report directly to the County’s Chief Financial Officer and will be required to provide a full report to the County's Audit Committee every year.

Specifically, the Office will conduct financial and compliance reviews of contracts with outside agencies and make recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of financial controls, operations, policies, procedures, and also encourage best practices.

There is nothing more important than public trust in government. The Office of Public/Private Accountability will bring additional strength to on-going efforts, including those established by our Board of Ethics, our Independent Counsel, which operates our

Whistleblower hotline, and our Monroe County Legislature, through its bi-partisan ethics and procurement policies.

Taxpayers are important investors in what we do as a government. We must ensure that they get what they pay for and get a good return on their investment.

Investments large and small are important even in a challenged economy. And our investments in education will truly pay dividends for years to come. For taxpayers, that means those are dollars well spent.

Monroe County is the lead government sponsor for Monroe Community College and it's no secret that, for my entire time as County Executive, I have been standing in strong support of a new Damon campus in downtown Rochester.

There is no question that MCC is a crown jewel in this region's educational system and is truly at the forefront of workforce development and success for the future.

But a new campus is not just about new space in a new location. It's about creating a better learning environment for students. It's about expanded programs and services to support student success. And it's about ensuring that students, young and old, will always have a pathway to affordable higher education in Rochester.

Did you know that for every \$1.00 a student invests in her education at the downtown campus, her income increases by \$8.20? Did you know that an MCC Downtown Campus contributes more than \$110,000,000 to our local economy each year?

In 2014, our Department of Environmental Services will be working closely with MCC, and with representatives from The DiMarco Group and LaBella Associates, to move the campus project from design to groundbreaking to construction at the corner of State Street and Morrie Silver Way.

We've set an aggressive goal to break ground in 2015 so we can have the 250,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility ready to welcome students, faculty, and staff in time for the fall semester in 2017.

In February, I had the honor of joining MCC President Anne Kress, Mayor Lovely Warren, and others for a visit from Vice President Joe Biden. He toured MCC's innovative Applied Technologies Center and praised the college's nationally-recognized skilled-trades programs.

We've watched as investors have lined up to support large scale projects at many of our colleges and universities. We cannot let our Community College lag behind.

MCC has waited patiently for more than a decade for a new Downtown Campus that is fitting of its national reputation. President Kress has been an incredible advocate for and champion of this project that will begin a new chapter in MCC history. Let's thank her.

Quality education and access to jobs will continue to give Monroe County a competitive edge as we produce results while protecting taxpayers in our community. But we do have a challenge to overcome.

Some people call it “Brain Drain.” It means we are losing our young people. I have two daughters, ages 25 and 29 who moved away. I have a 32 year old step-son who is now on the West coast pursuing a future.

My situation is not unlike a lot of other parents and families who watch their adult children look elsewhere for opportunity and prosperity.

It has never been more important for us to engage and empower the next generation.

They are commonly referred to as the “millennials”. American pollster and author John Zogby calls young people born between 1979 and 1994 the “The First Globals.” These future leaders believe it’s their job to give back on a global scale. Our job is to do everything we can as a community to leverage their talent and energy for our local economy.

This year Monroe County will launch a program called “The Monroe 200”. We will be asking 200 millenials or “first globals” to help us create the kind of community they want to live in. The Monroe 200 will be tasked with making recommendations on everything from the types of jobs they would like to see, to the types of housing and amenities that would support their generation. No topic or idea is off table or off-limits. We want to know what they need to make Monroe County their permanent home.

We will capitalize on our many incredible colleges and universities as a resource by asking our college Presidents for nominees to the Monroe 200.

I’m sure that like me, there are many parents out there who have heard, “Mom you are not listening to me” from their millennial-aged children. Well, to Monroe County’s “first globals”, your County Executive can’t wait to listen!

Retaining young talent is a big challenge for our community, but we have others. Poverty is an issue that leaves many children and young adults vulnerable. Fortunately, Monroe County has shown that we can be very successful in using innovation and collaboration to lift our most at-risk neighbors out of poverty while simultaneously holding down the cost to taxpayers.

There’s a problem that’s becoming pervasive all across this nation: the sexual exploitation and trafficking of at-risk children and young people. For young women, the numbers are heartbreaking. Estimates show that 33% of women in the U.S. will experience rape, sexual exploitation, or commercial sexual exploitation at some point in their lives. That’s one in every three women.

We know the risk increases exponentially when there are issues of poverty and homelessness. It’s not only disturbing, it’s unacceptable.

Safe Harbour is a program that can make a difference. In partnership with the Center for Youth, Monroe County submitted a proposal to the State Office of Children and Family Services to establish the pilot program here. The application was approved and in 2013 the County began working with the Center and other community partners to implement the Safe Harbour program for the first time.

Our Rochester-Monroe County Youth Bureau is taking the lead, serving as the umbrella organization for Safe Harbour. That's because government can often identify and refer at-risk children who already have contact with our Child Protective system.

Safe Harbour is a true collaborative effort. The Monroe County Sheriff's Office, the Monroe County District Attorney's Office, the Bivona Child Advocacy Center, the Society for the Protection and Care of Children, and so many other service organizations have all come together to help ensure we are the community that fights for our most vulnerable citizens.

The program is already making great progress. Last year alone, Safe Harbour held over 85 awareness, outreach, and training events, reaching more than 1,000 youth, 1,000 adults, and 75 agencies in our area. Those are incredible results for an effort in its first year.

I would like to take this opportunity tonight to recognize Center for Youth Executive Director, and member of the Rochester City Council, Elaine Spaul for her passionate work to bring Safe Harbour to our community. She was unable to attend tonight, but I want to thank Elaine and her team at the Center for Youth for their efforts.

Each and every day important work takes place in our Children's Detention Center to support at-risk and troubled young people to help them find a pathway to success.

I mentioned earlier tonight our success in bringing New York's first COSTCO to Rochester.

But let me tell you the rest of the story. To clear the Westfall Road site for COSTCO we had to jump a significant barrier. The land which is now privately owned used to belong to Monroe County. And, for years, it had been the site of our Children's Detention Center. But the CDC was one of those outdated government buildings that wasn't built to last and was costly to replace and it was sitting right in the center of COSTCO's proposed footprint.

Unfortunately the COSTCO project had a very tight time frame to demolish our building. Also unfortunate, the County's attempts to pay for a relocation of the facility was tied-up in a knot of politics and red tape.

Monroe County could not in good conscience move forward until we had a safe and permanent solution for the young people who call the CDC their temporary home. Those children are the County's responsibility and we could not fail to protect their interests.

But this challenge was a true example of how we succeed when we all work together. Mayor Warren's leadership was critical, if not the catalyst for progress. The Governor,

Senator Joe Robach, Assemblyman Joe Morelle, Vinnie Esposito from Empire State Development, County Legislature Majority leader Steve Tucciarello, Legislator Willie Lightfoot, Deputy County Executive Dan DeLaus, and developer Anthony Costello all played a role in our success.

But I would be remiss not to recognize the true unsung heroes in this process. After all the hurdles were crossed, Director Mike Garland and his team at our Department of Environmental Services were left with only 30 days to complete the relocation of the detention center to its new location in Rush. That's just 30 days to make the new facility move-in ready. And only 30 days to make sure it was also properly secured and equipped to handle our young occupants.

Mike and his team pulled it off and they deserve great credit for working closely with City and State officials to make it happen. Let's thank everyone for proving that bi-partisan solutions can and do pave the way for important projects that create jobs.

If you thought that our Environmental Services team would be off the hook simply because they are busy performing relocation miracles and preparing to construct a new college campus you'd be mistaken. They just completed a new modification to our Recycling Center that will make protecting the environment a lot simpler, more convenient, and cost-efficient for local taxpayers.

In 2011, an expanded Monroe County Recycling Program gave us the ability to collect all plastics 1-7, including drinking cups, yogurt containers, take-out containers, and almost everything in between.

Well, we have now completed an extensive conversion of our Recycling Center to what's called "Single-Stream" processing. That's a technical term, but what residents should know is that they can now take all plastics, one through seven, and put them into the same container as their paper, metal, or glass items. No more multiple containers, no more sorting at the curb. Hundreds of different items can be placed in just one bin.

It's a simple solution, but the best way to increase recycling participation is to remove barriers for residents. In partnership with Waste Management, Monroe County plans to roll out a public education campaign in the near future.

Tonight I have a special introduction to make. I'd like you to meet our newest employee who will be working in a very challenging job, alongside some of the most dedicated public servants we have at the County.

Each and every day, our dedicated Probation Officers put their lives on the line working side by side with local law enforcement agencies to keep us safe.

The new addition to the department calls attention to the tremendous risks our Probation Officers take on the job. Her name is Bishop and she is a specially-trained Belgian Malinois Shepherd donated to Monroe County Probation by the New York State Police. Bishop will help in the fight against illegal drugs.

Bishop is named in honor of a young Probation Officer from Georgia. Tiffany Danielle Bishop was killed in the line of duty in 2011. Monroe County is proud that Officer Bishop's memory and legacy will continue to live-on in our community through her namesake's service.

Canine Officer Bishop is here tonight along with her handler Officer Robert Masucci. I'd like to ask both to come to the stage now so we can thank them.

But you don't need to leave the State or even our City to understand the dangers that Probation Officers can face while on duty. Last May, two of our own – Officer Jennifer Kraus and Officer Jennifer Oliphant – were performing routine surveillance when an unknown gunman approached their car without warning and fired. Thanks to quick reflexes and some very good luck in a very bad situation, both escaped without injuries.

But the event was a sobering reminder to us all that our Probation Officers put themselves in harm's way every time they answer the call.

Officers Kraus is here tonight representing all Monroe County's Probation Officers. I'd ask her to come to the stage so we can thank her and her colleagues for their dedicated service to our community.

To say I am proud of the people who work in this County government is an absolute understatement. We have 4,500 incredible employees who go to work each and every day with one goal in mind – to deliver the best service at the best cost to you, the public.

Let me tell you about some of the outstanding work that's being done. Our DWI Coordinator, Peggy Duffy, received the 2013 Richard "Dick" Novelli Award for Statewide DWI awareness. Environmental Services employee Kevin Blackburn won the American Public Works Association's prestigious Walter Nichols Award. And our Fleet Manager Melvin Rose, was given the APWA's Fleet Manager of the Year Award.

And John Clark is the Director of our Crime Lab. Last year, under his leadership, the lab achieved international accreditation through the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation board. This is one of the highest standards any forensic lab can receive. The Lab's firearms section was also recognized by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives for achieving 500 hits in the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network, an incredible achievement in the fight against crime.

Please join me in congratulating their good work. These four are just a sampling of the many County employees who are doing outstanding work on behalf of taxpayers every day. Our County workforce is first and foremost a collection of hardworking public servants, making a difference because they believe in giving back.

Last year, County employees volunteered hundreds of hours in service to our community, doing everything from tutoring at local schools to providing gifts and supplies for local

veterans and their families. And together, County employees donated over \$400,000 to the United Way's Live United Campaign in 2013.

Tonight, we have a representative from every County department here, from our Airport to our Zoo, and I would like to recognize them now. They are here on behalf of their co-workers, and all County employees, who do so much to protect our world-class quality of life.

So tonight I end where I began. My role as County Executive is to work hard each day to keep the state of county government strong. Keeping the state of our community strong is everyone's job.

Let's return to the story of the Strong National Museum of Play. Margaret Woodbury Strong used her generosity to help strengthen our community. It was an incredible gift. Through the years public and private support has transformed the original vision into the second largest children's museum in the country.

This past June, we learned that in the fall of 2015 the Toy Industry Hall of Fame will be co-located here with the National Toy Hall of Fame.

And The Strong has captured the attention of Family Fun magazine, which each year awards honors for places to travel. On the Today show last week it was announced that The Strong ranked #1 among the top 10 family museums in the country and number 4 among the top 12 family destinations in the country.

One woman's vision and selfless gift of a doll and toy collection and years of community support has led to two nationally-recognized halls of fame, millions of dollars in investment, hundreds of jobs, and a vital asset that contributes to our reputation as one of the nation's best places to raise a family.

Keeping the state of our community strong is the job of us all.

I attended a breakfast last week and one of the people being honored asked the audience a question.

What will you do to make a difference?

And tonight I will do the same. What is the unique talent or interest you have that can be your contribution.

How many hours can you donate each week or dollars can you spend to improve this community's quality of life?

In the height of the space race, President John F. Kennedy said, "We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

It may not be easy, it may be hard, but what will your contribution be? What will you do to make a difference?

Maybe making a difference is as simple as not taking our community for granted. We have great assets, great resources, great companies, and many reasons to call Monroe County home.

But Monroe County was built by the spirit of her people. And the spirit of the people will sustain this county's future.

It's been said that we have two choices in life. We can give up or give back. I don't know about you, but I have never been a quitter.

Thanks for coming tonight. God bless.

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