



*News From*

# **Maggie Brooks**

## *Monroe County Executive*

**For Immediate Release**  
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### **THE 2012 STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS AS DELIVERED BY MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MAGGIE BROOKS**

*Wednesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.  
St. John Fisher College, Cleary Auditorium at Kearney Hall*

Good evening.

Before I begin, let us all recognize the brave military men and women who are serving our country overseas, in addition to all those who have sacrificed on behalf of our nation in the past. Also keep especially close in our thoughts and prayers the family of Army Captain Bruce Kevin Clark, of Spencerport, who recently lost his life while stationed in Afghanistan. Please join me now in a moment of silence to honor Captain Clark's service.

Thank you and welcome to the beautiful campus of St. John Fisher College.

Being here tonight is a fitting reminder of how fortunate Monroe County is to benefit from over a dozen area colleges and universities that help define our quality of life. Our community is regularly recognized as one of the most educated in the entire nation. Outstanding institutions like St. John Fisher play a vital role.

This year, *U.S. News and World Report* recognized the College as one of America's Best Universities. For the 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row, *Forbes* did the same. And in each of the past six years, Fisher has been named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for its service on behalf of disadvantaged youth. It is the highest federal recognition a school can achieve for its commitment to learning and civic engagement.

But what catches my attention about Fisher the most is that it is always growing! We may even leave this campus tonight, only to come back in the morning and find a new addition.

Look at the past 15 years alone. Not only has the College added over twenty academic programs and seven NCAA Division Three sports during that time, but it has completed the Golisano Academic Gateway, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Building, the William A. Fay Building, the Wegman's School of Pharmacy, the Wegman's School of Nursing, Founders Hall, Keough Hall, LeChase Commons, Growney Stadium, the Polisseni Track and Field Complex... I could go on and on.

Yet, the more things change here on campus, the more they stay the same. St John Fisher's motto of, "Teach me goodness, discipline, and strength," continues to capture the College's values, and has come to define the well-rounded education it offers its nearly 4,000 students annually.

Dr. Donald Bain, the College's sixth President, deserves a great deal of recognition for St. John Fisher's recent success. The driving force behind the College's Vision 2020 Capital Campaign, I am fortunate to call Dr. Bain not only a strong community partner, but a close friend. Let's take this opportunity to thank him for his dedication to this College and our entire community.

We are also joined tonight by Sheriff Patrick O'Flynn, County Clerk Cheryl Dinolfo, and District Attorney Sandra Doorley. Welcome and thank you all for your commitment to good-government in Monroe County.

To Legislature President Jeff Adair, Majority Leader Anthony Daniele, Minority Leader Ted O'Brien, and all County lawmakers in attendance – the State of the County Address was originally designed as an annual report to the members of your Legislative body. You are all part of our good work in County government. I could not govern as effectively without your collaboration.

To our government leaders at the town, village, city, and school district level, thank you for reinforcing our County efforts to put taxpayers first.

And finally, my family. Jim & Rachel Wiesner, and my husband Bob. This year brought a new joy to all of our lives. His name is Aidan Patrick Wiesner and he is eight months old. It's amazing how a new grandchild can bring a whole new perspective to life. To me, it validates our efforts to do what's needed to secure a great community for future generations.

Each and every year, it is my responsibility to come before all of you to answer one crucial question – What is the state of Monroe County?

Taxpayers across our community attend, tune-in, or catch a recap of this address on the late local news to find out more about where we stand and where we are heading. This year, many are even following along on Twitter, where excerpts of tonight's speech are being live-cast as we speak. You can follow along too, by heading to [monroecounty.gov](http://monroecounty.gov), and clicking on the "Follow us on Twitter" icon on the left side of our homepage.

Everyone listening tonight has at least one thing in common. We have all chosen to make Monroe County home, and in doing so, we've all taken ownership of our collective future. Since I took office as the first woman to be elected Monroe County Executive in 2004, we've worked together, wholeheartedly investing our time, energy, and resources in the fight to make this community the greatest place to live, work, and raise a family.

It hasn't always been easy. But that's what I love about my job. Public service means the most when the challenges are the greatest.

As a government, Monroe County has set records for everything from property tax stability, to environmental protection. As a community, Monroe County has fully fought its way through the latest economic recession, one that cost far too many workers their jobs and families their homes. We are not only recovering from a stalled economy, we are now expanding.

And people are noticing. We've been named America's 7<sup>th</sup> fastest-recovering city. We've been recognized as one of the most affordable, one of the most innovative, and one of the best places in the entire country to buy a home, and raise a family. Our quality of life remains second to none.

I consider myself an unabashed cheerleader for this community and its unlimited potential. But sometimes it takes an outside view to put it all in perspective. The editors of TheStreet.com, an American financial news and services website, recently took a look at our region's strengths.

Placing us alongside iconic cities, like Chicago and London, here's what they said. Our community is "One of the Top Ten Places Poised for Greatness in the Year 2012." No, not one of the top places in the State. Not even one of the top places in the nation. We are one of only ten places in the entire world to make that list.

With a County government committed to protecting taxpayers, maintaining essential services, and promoting job growth, that should come as no surprise. And with an ever expanding local economy, it's also no surprise we've been recognized by the U.S. Census Bureau as one of only two Upstate New York counties to *gain* population over the past year.

It is often said that taxpayers vote with their feet. Well, if that's the case, Monroe County is winning by a landslide in the only election that really counts.

So what is the State of our County in 2012?

We are a community ready to leverage our historic achievements in property tax stability and balanced budgets to complete a full economic recovery, and more. We are a community well on our way to becoming one of the strongest economies in America. We are a community poised for greatness! Not only in 2012, but for years into the future.

Our highly skilled workforce has already cemented our reputation as a leader in optics, health care, education, food and beverage, alternative energy, agriculture, and advanced manufacturing. And the dedicated workers who push our economy forward each and every day stand ready to utilize our historic strengths in manufacturing and innovation to complete our transformation to a diverse, knowledge-based economy.

As a result of Monroe County's collaborative spirit, and our public support of private sector job creators, our community continues to lead all of Upstate New York in private sector job growth.

In fact, we would have led the entire State in job growth since this time last year if not for New York City, but it has the advantage of a workforce that is approximately eight times larger. Yet, we can take hometown pride from the fact that we did outpace growth in our Upstate sister cities of Buffalo, Syracuse and Albany. Not only did we outpace them individually, we outpaced them collectively.

But that's only half the story. Ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to announce tonight that our area has not only gained back, but exceeded, the number of jobs lost during the latest recession.

The Brookings Institute says Monroe County is a top three economy in the nation and a top fifty economy in the world. And they are right. Yes, Monroe County is open for business. And, yes, Monroe County is playing a prominent role in helping put New York State back on a path to prosperity. Our work isn't done, but there is real cause for optimism here and now.

Monroe County government is proud to be a critical partner in ongoing, collaborative efforts to make this community a competitive destination for economic investment.

In 2011, Monroe County worked side by side with 133 employers to help them locate or expand their businesses here. That means \$800 million in new investment in our local economy. It also means more than 18,000 local jobs will be created and more than 10,000 local jobs will be retained.

Little of that success would be possible without our most powerful tool for local job creation and retention – COMIDA.

There is little doubt left that our Industrial Development Agency is doing something right. Just this month, a report released by the New York State Comptroller found that our IDA outperforms similar programs state-wide. In fact, COMIDA produces a 5:1 cost to benefit ratio, one of the best in the entire State. In other words, we are getting great jobs-created value for the non-taxpayer dollars we've invested.

Let me explain it another way. In 2010, COMIDA projects were expected to create 2,000 local jobs. The actual number turned out to be nearly 14,000. That is true return on investment.

Our County seat, the City of Rochester, continues to be a strong focus for the investment of Monroe County's attention and resources. Last year, 46% of all COMIDA investments were approved for projects and companies located in the City.

Economic development is a team sport and one of the strongest job partners I have is Rochester Mayor Tom Richards. We've done so many ribbon cuttings together that our teams actually created a joint City/County ribbon to celebrate our shared successes. Mayor Richards, thank you for being here and for your service to Rochester.

Monroe County's economy is absolutely on the right track. We have the momentum and together we are achieving attention-grabbing results. But the path to expansion has not been pain free.

Like many in Rochester, I received the news of Kodak's bankruptcy decision with a heavy heart, and concern for the company's workers and their families.

For Monroe County, Kodak isn't just an employer. It's not just an iconic company and brand. Kodak has been an economic and philanthropic engine that has defined so much of who we are as a community. Kodak will always be part of Rochester's identity.

And the entrepreneurial spirit housed in Kodak buildings for so much of our storied history is now finding new life and new opportunity in other places all across our community.

Locally-owned and operated company, Logical Images, was founded in 1999. It is a developer of visual technologies that increase diagnostic accuracy, enhance medical education, and heighten patient knowledge in the field of medicine.

The company's lead engineer, Bill Haake, came over from Kodak 11 years ago with a clear, strategic vision for utilizing digital imagery to improve the healthcare industry. Today, Logical Images has developed the most comprehensive digital medical library in the world, with over 60,000 unique images.

Rochester Precision Optics is a leading manufacturer of optics components and systems for the Department of Defense and many commercial clients.

The company was founded in 2005, when it acquired Kodak's Optical Imaging Systems division, which was being closed as a result of downsizing. Owner Bill Hurley negotiated with Kodak to bring 60 jobs and vital manufacturing equipment over to the new operation.

The company has grown from 60 employees then, to 180 workers today, and continues to expand. Recently RPO invested more than \$10 million in renovations, and with the help of COMIDA, is already expecting to create another 130 new jobs in the near future.

ITT Exelis is a global supplier of innovative night vision, remote sensing, and navigation solutions that provide sight and situational awareness at the space, air, and ground level. In 2009, the company acquired Kodak's Remote Sensing Systems operation, and chose Rochester as a headquarters for its world-leading Space Systems Division.

That decision saved 1,800 local jobs. And now ITT is already looking to expand. Working with COMIDA, it is now leasing an additional 120,000 square feet of space at the Rochester Technology Park.

As a result of that public-private partnership, our community will retain close to 600 good-paying jobs in the fields of research and engineering.

Logical Images Vice President of Operations Bill Haake, Rochester Precision Optics Production Manager Robert Thorpe, and ITT Exelis Vice President of Engineering Operations Joe Westbay and Communications Project Manager Irene Lockwood are all with us this evening.

In the words of Logical Images co-founder, Doctor Art Papier, all of these outstanding local companies are examples of "Kodak moments living on." Let's give them all a round of applause for their vision, their dedication, and their success right here in our community.

The groundbreaking products and services produced at local companies like these are putting Monroe County on the map. Earlier this year, our region was recognized as one of the top 50 largest export markets in the United States, with annual shipments totaling more than \$5 billion dollars. We are populating the world with Rochester products!

There's one particular industry in Monroe County that is experiencing an absolutely incredible boom. Many local precision manufacturers are expanding their operations, growing their investment, and adding fuel to our local economy. With the help of a County program we launched in 2010, some of these precision manufacturing companies are receiving assistance to help purchase equipment and acquire technologies to produce new or enhanced products.

Monroe County is still the second largest home to manufacturing jobs in all of New York State. 40% of all New York State jobs are in manufacturing today and precision manufacturing accounts for 20% of all jobs in Monroe County as well. Yet, when it comes to precision manufacturing, there is one problem. Local employers continue to face a tremendous shortage of skilled workers. Only a select few have the training and experience to perform this advanced type of work.

However, Monroe County is ready and willing to help develop the highly trained, highly skilled, and highly capable workforce of tomorrow. In partnership with Monroe Community College, Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES, and the Finger Lakes Advanced Manufacturers' Enterprise, Monroe County will be launching a new Summer Precision Manufacturing Student Training Program.

Students will learn hands-on machining skills at the BOCES-2 center in Spencerport. These local 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders will also spend three Fridays visiting Monroe County manufacturers to see how their newly acquired skills can be applied, and to learn more about the good-paying careers they can build for themselves in the future. As an added bonus, the students will also receive three hours of course credit at MCC for their participation.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank Dr. Anne Kress, President of Monroe Community College, Mike Mandina of the Finger Lakes Advanced Manufacturers' Enterprise, and Joe Salemi, JoAnne Antonacci, and Joseph Kelly, of Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES, for their dedication to the young people who are the future of our local economy.

Until every local resident looking for a job can find one, and until every local employer looking for a skilled worker can hire one, more work needs to be done.

That's why Monroe County has decided to expand our existing Monroe Manufactures Jobs Program, to include a renewed and strategic focus on one of the true growth industries in our community, and all across the nation – precision welding.

As Mike Krupnicki, owner of Mahany Welding Supply will tell you, skilled welders are currently in short supply in our area. To address this challenge, Mahany recently expanded its facility with a 5,000 square foot addition to create the groundbreaking Rochester Arc and Flame Center.

The Center is a new training facility dedicated solely to teaching classes in welding, blacksmithing, and glass blowing. It's the only of its kind in our region and one of the first in the State. Best of all, the Rochester Arc and Flame Center is a private-sector answer to a public employment challenge.

To further enhance the Center's reach and effectiveness, Monroe County will be forging a new partnership with Mahany Welding to expand our Monroe Manufactures Jobs program.

The program was designed to connect students of MCC's Precision Machining, Optical Fabrication, and AAS Precision Machining programs with local companies.

Monroe County's new welding-targeted expansion will do essentially the same, instead using the Rochester Arc and Flame Center as the education source, while encouraging local employers to hire its highly skilled graduates. To incentivize the process, both the hiree and the manufacturer will receive a bonus if the employee remains employed at the company for a full year.

Monroe isn't just manufacturing jobs. Together with strong private partners like Mahany Welding, we are manufacturing a workforce that will prove essential to our future success. Please join me in recognizing and thanking Mahany owner and President of Rochester Arc and Flame, Mike Krupnicki, for his company's dedication to this exciting new endeavor.

Monroe County's Director of Economic Development, Judy Seil, is my talented right-hand woman when it comes to creating and retaining local jobs. In Monroe County's strong and diverse arsenal of tools to help local businesses, Judy is truly the most powerful weapon I have. Please help me thank her for her leadership.

There's another person I need to recognize tonight for his commitment to our community and our local economy. He doesn't work for Monroe County, but his work positively impacts every resident that lives here.

Tourism is a vital industry that showcases all our community has to offer for residents and visitors alike. Last year alone, more than 1.8 million people came here to enjoy our historical, cultural, athletic, and natural attractions, making tourism a \$1 billion industry in this region.

I often call Ed Hall our community's chief cheerleader. Ed is President and CEO of Visit Rochester and deserves a great deal of credit for telling anyone who will listen that there are "many reasons in every season" to visit our community.

After 15 years, Ed is retiring in August to pursue a new chapter in life which will definitely include his love of photography.

Because Ed's work to promote Monroe County never ends, he couldn't be here with us tonight. In fact, he is boarding a plane we speak. But I owe Ed a debt of gratitude for his dedicated service to Monroe County, and I wish him a very happy retirement.

We are a community poised for greatness. But we are already achieving great things in our community and in our government as well. A balanced budget, a reduced deficit, a smaller government that lives within its means, and a collaborative spirit that allows us to put people ahead of politics. That's the Monroe County way.

"All eyes on Monroe," has evolved from a New York State adage, to a national approach to developing best-practices. Communities all across the nation are turning their attention to our backyard for answers to some of their most persistent challenges. At the level of government that is closest to the people, Monroe County is getting real results.

We have a model of success that starts with a very basic bottom line. It all begins with a tireless commitment to fiscal responsibility and restraint. To fulfill that commitment, Monroe County balances our budget each and every year without raising the local property tax rate.

If we want to strengthen our local economy, we have to let taxpayers keep more of their own money. If we want to keep our young people from looking for a future elsewhere, we need to encourage private sector job growth. If we want seniors to stay in their homes, we need to work to control their tax burden. And if we want to maintain a world class quality of life for our entire community, we must reinforce Monroe County's commitment to a government that believes in spending less, not taxing more.

Again this year, Monroe County did exactly that. For the 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, the County property tax rate has not increased in 2012.

Not only is our 2012 Monroe County Budget in full compliance with New York State's new cap that controls property taxes, but it also complies with our own ground-breaking Monroe County Taxpayer Protection Act of 2007, which controls local spending.

I was proud to develop our common sense local spending cap with my partners in the County Legislature. And unlike other legislative bodies, where governing seems to be more gridlock than solutions, our Taxpayer Protection Act passed with bipartisan support.

To once again fulfill Monroe County's flat-tax promise, we will continue to rein in spending in 2012. We will continue to overcome structural budget challenges in vital programs that serve an important role, but have grown past the point of sustainability. We will continue to do more with less. We will not spend money we don't have.

For the coming year, through a combination of strict cost controls and the continued streamlining of County services, non-mandated spending, or the portion of our budget we actually control at the local level, is virtually flat. At the same time, Monroe County's mandated expenses, which are controlled by the State and Federal governments, will grow by nearly \$6 million.

To overcome the burden of mandated spending, each and every year I ask our dedicated county employees to find savings, to do more than ever before, with less than ever before.

This year, they again answered the call. By embracing the principles of fiscal restraint that Monroe County is proud to promote from the top on down, our Departments were able to achieve \$8 million in efficiencies for 2012.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our department and division heads, and all of our 4,500 County employees, for understanding that government must make the same tough choices that families are making every day in their own household budgets.

By utilizing early retirement and attrition strategies, we reduced headcount. Working collaboratively with workforce healthcare providers, we achieved an unprecedented cost freeze. And by simply operating more efficiently and effectively in every corner of County government, we were able to produce \$18 million in real, lasting savings for taxpayers.

Those enduring structural solutions will help to better protect local taxpayers and their families for generations to come.

But, when it comes to long-term fiscal restraint, Monroe County didn't stop there. We've all heard about the debt crisis at other levels of government. Well, Monroe County isn't settling for solutions that simply curtail new debt. We've actually started paying down debt that is already on the books.

In April, the County voluntarily paid off, in advance, some debt issued a decade ago. It's a move that will save local taxpayers approximately \$4.1 million in interest that otherwise would have been paid over the next ten years. Monroe County is proud to have taken this unprecedented action to lessen the load for the generations of tomorrow when it comes to the burden of what government wanted yesterday.

Monroe County's Chief Financial Officer Scott Adair is the keeper of our commitment to fiscal responsibility. In recognition of his talents, yesterday he was awarded the Rochester Business Journal's Non-Profit Financial Executive of the Year award! Let's give Scott a hand.

Monroe County's local commitment to property tax stability and debt reduction is a good start. But there is no doubt more remains to be done at other levels of government. Together, we must tackle the greatest challenge facing taxpayers across the State of New York today – mandates.

I know that Governor Andrew Cuomo agrees, because I continue to stand by his side with local leaders from all parties and all levels of government to promote and support real mandate reform.

The Governor understands that in places like Monroe County, State and Federal spending devours 82 % of our total budget. This year, mandates will cost local taxpayers a colossal \$686 million. That's a nearly \$6 million increase over last year, and it means Monroe County will control less than one-fifth of our total spending for the coming year.

The simple truth is that mandates have plagued local governments in New York State for decades. There's been a lot of talk, but little action taken to achieve true reform.

This year, thanks to Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature, real progress is being made. The Governor's Executive Budget included potential savings for counties of approximately \$450 million over the next five years.

You've heard me talk about the nine mandated programs that consume 90% of all County property taxes collected state-wide. The adopted State budget addresses two of those nine – public pensions and Medicaid.

New York State is only one of two states in the nation where County taxpayers are forced to bear a share of the cost of Medicaid. This year, Albany rightly approved a hard cap on that local share. And over the next few years, the State will absorb all future growth that otherwise would have been pushed down to county taxpayers.

It's a great step forward, but the truth is Monroe County created its own hard cap on Medicaid spending years ago, in 2007, when we adopted what has since come to be known as The Medicaid Swap.

It was a groundbreaking decision to lift the burden of Medicaid off of the backs of property taxpayers. Five years later, our innovative solution will have saved local taxpayers tens of millions of dollars through the end of this year.

I have been a longtime advocate for mandate reform, and have worked at the State and Federal level to redesign Medicaid so both its services and expenses will be sustainable for future generations. We still have a lot of work to do, and I encourage the Governor and the Legislature to build upon this year's bi-partisan progress. If New York State continues to be serious about mandate reform, local governments will someday be able to move past talking about property tax stability, and start a real conversation about cutting the tax burden for all residents and families.

Partnering for prosperity in a spirit of bipartisanship is something we've done well in Monroe County for years. We likely have more innovative shared service agreements than any other county in the State. Much of our inter-municipal success is in the area of public safety.

Unfortunately, our public safety demands are changing. Government's fundamental responsibility, to protect its citizens, has taken on new meaning and new challenges.

Like many communities across the nation, Monroe County is starting to witness the devastating effect that bullying can have on our children. Bullying victims can suffer from depression, anxiety, isolation, nervousness, low self-esteem, and declining school performance.

In fact, almost 160,000 students across the nation avoid some school each year just to avoid being bullied. In rare cases, bullying can even lead to physical harm – whether perpetrated by a tormenter, or inflicted on oneself.

Blake Ellis was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade when bullying changed everything. Through no fault of his own, Blake became the victim of persistent taunts and verbal abuse. He was routinely attacked with words so hurtful they can't be shared in this venue.

Blake's grades suffered and he missed almost 30 days of classes that year. He finally found refuge in his school's theater and art programs, which allowed him to feel comfortable expressing himself in a safe environment.

Now a Junior at Fairport High School, Blake has taken an active role in the school's CARE week, which encourages young people to make good choices, and treat all classmates with dignity and respect.

About being bullied, Blake said "It opened my eyes to see that it doesn't matter what people say, because I am who I am, and I always will be."

An incredibly brave young man, Blake is with us tonight. I thank him for letting me share his story, and for being an inspiration to young and old alike. Let's give him a hand.

There are hundreds of similar stories from young people just like Blake. To answer their calls for help, Monroe County is taking real action.

Home to Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony, we are a community built upon the principles of acceptance and inclusivity. We owe it to our future to ensure that our young people can live, play, and learn in an environment that makes them feel both safe and secure.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, Monroe County hosted the inaugural Call to Action to Prevent Bullying. Our Rochester-Monroe County Youth Bureau, our Office of Mental Health, and our Departments of Probation and Public Safety joined dozens of local youth advocacy groups in an effort to provide students, teachers, and parents with the tools they need to intervene on behalf of bullying victims, while also discouraging bullying behavior.

We had an incredible showing. More than 200 young people attended this session, and all signed a pledge to prevent bullying in their schools and in their communities.

Now, Monroe County is ready to do even more to follow the pro-active lead of our young people. Together with my partners in the County Legislature, we have introduced legislation to officially criminalize the act of cyber bullying in our community.

Cyber-bullying is the most common type of harassment among our students today. For those who don't know, cyber-bullying is online or electronic intimidation. In the year 2012, technology is everywhere. For our kids, who rely on phones and social media as part of their daily routine, there is no "off" button in the event they fall victim to cyber bullying.

When our landmark local legislation is approved, anyone who uses an electronic device with the intent to overtly harass, threaten, or otherwise bully a person under the age of eighteen in Monroe County will be guilty of a crime, and subject to a \$1,000 fine, and/or a sentence of one year in jail.

I look forward to signing this bill into law. I would also like to thank Legislators Carmen Gumina of Webster and Michael Barker of Fairport for co-sponsoring this significant

effort. Both men are public educators who have seen first-hand the impact of bullying in their schools. Legislators Barker and Gumina are here tonight, let's thank them with a round of applause.

Monroe County is doing what it can to better protect local students from harm, but we all know that the foundation needed to build healthy and successful children can only be found in the home. What we do together today to reinforce those strong home foundations will determine our future for generations to come.

Our community is not unique in facing challenges of poverty, illiteracy, and far too many local young people who aren't graduating with a high school degree. But the simple truth is there's no such thing as a City challenge or a County challenge or a school district challenge. There are only community challenges. When a local student underperforms, it doesn't matter what school they attend. When a local single mother is forced to make a choice between watching her children and keeping her job, it doesn't matter where she lives. The only thing that matters is how we, as a community, respond.

Monroe County's seat at the table comes namely through our Department of Human Services, which strives to give disadvantaged families the tools they need to find lasting success and security. But it can't be all about public assistance. That's why we continue to develop innovative public-private solutions to further improve outcomes for local families, while also keeping a vigilant eye on the bottom line.

Monroe County's Building Healthy Children Program is a collaborative effort between the County Department of Human Services, the United Way, the University of Rochester Medical Center, the Mt. Hope Family Center, and the Society for the Protection and Care of Children. It's a program designed to provide at-risk new parents with the support they need to give their babies the very best possible start in life.

Ours is one of only 17 evidence-based home visitation programs that were awarded a 5-year grant by the United States Children's Bureau in 2008. Building Healthy Children has even received multiple awards for excellence, including the Rochester Business Journal's Greater Rochester Impact Award for 2011.

But awards and recognitions don't tell the whole story. Results do.

Ashley Thornton is a 23-year-old single mother of two beautiful children. Justice is three, and Brooklyn is two. She enrolled in the Building Healthy Children Program in 2009, and using the benefits of her new support system, Ashley was able to work towards becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant at SUNY Brockport's Rochester Educational Opportunity Center.

Ashley certainly has a bright future ahead. She is able to provide for her children, while she simultaneously works on her LPN certification. Ashley is proof that when we offer a hand-up, versus a hand-out, we can build a lasting foundation for strong local families and futures. Join me in thanking Ashley Thornton for allowing us to be inspired by her story this evening.

Monroe County's Nurse Family Partnership was created by our Department of Human Services, our Department of Health, and The Children's Agenda to combat child abuse and some of the most persistent threats to our entire community's well-being.

Nurse Family Partnership pairs at-risk mothers with specially trained nurses from the early stages of pregnancy, all the way through the child's second birthday. Promoting safe and healthy parenting skills means less risk for child abuse, fewer young mothers forced into public assistance, and stronger families. Best of all, NFP is supported by a mix of private dollars, including support from the United Way of Greater Rochester, and County and State funding. The program shows first-hand the power of public-private partnerships.

On January 19<sup>th</sup>, I attended the fourth Nurse-Family Partnership graduation. The moms I met there are incredibly resilient and inspiring.

Even in times of shrinking and uncertain funding for initiatives like NFP, Monroe County knows it is important to continue our strategic investments in programs that help local families achieve a lifetime of health and economic stability. That's why we kept funding for both the Building Healthy Children and Nurse Family Partnership programs whole in our 2012 Budget. It was an easy call. Children and families stand as our community's most valuable resource.

Monroe County Public Health Director Dr. Andrew Doniger, Department of Human Services Commissioner Kelly Reed, Director of Child and Family Services Cindy Lewis, and Executive Director of The Children's Agenda Dr. Jeff Kaczorowski have teamed with many dedicated nurses and case workers to make these programs a resounding success. They deserve our thanks and praise.

It was Benjamin Franklin who said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Nearly two and a quarter centuries after the passing of that great Founding Father, Monroe County continues to develop and support programs that bring great return on investment for taxpayers.

In Monroe County, we also believe in the power of partnership to build a healthy community.

Most of us in this room have been touched by cancer in some way. Maybe we've lost a friend or a colleague, or have even watched a family member fight this devastating disease.

Cancer touches almost everyone. More than 1.7 million new cases will be diagnosed in the United States in the coming year alone. One in two men and one in three women will develop cancer at some point in their lifetime. And cancer is a serious concern for our aging population, with nearly 80% of all cancers diagnosed in people age 55 and older.

If those statistics don't hit home, here's one that will. Cancer recently surpassed heart disease as the leading cause of death in Monroe County today.

But there is hope. There are 12 million people living in our country who have had some form of cancer. That means there are 12 million survivors.

And there is cause for optimism. It's called Cancer Mission 2020, and Monroe County is proud to be a supporting partner. What is now a nation-wide cause to eradicate cancer by the end of the decade actually began right here in our community.

Gary Mervis, the inspirational founder and chairman of Camp Good Days and Special times, has made the fight against cancer his life's mission. Cancer Mission 2020 was his idea, and it has since brought together a network of talented doctors, researchers, scientists, and volunteers who are all dedicated to a single goal – ending cancer, once and for all.

Tonight, I am asking everyone to join the fight and get involved. It's easy. Just go online and go to [cancermission2020.com](http://cancermission2020.com). Sign the petition. Donate. Volunteer. Do it tonight. Do it right now. It's that important of a cause.

My longtime friend Gary Mervis was unable to with be us tonight, and with good reason. As we speak, he is being presented with the Major Donald Holleder Award at the Press Radio Club's Day of Champions Dinner, a well-deserved honor. Anyone who knows Gary will tell you he has a capacity for love and compassion towards others that is unparalleled. I don't think we can thank Gary enough for the good he does in our community, and all around the world.

For those without medical coverage, illnesses like cancer can have a devastating economic impact.

The Monroe County Prescription Discount Card was launched in 2010 to help local seniors and low income families overcome health-related financial challenges. In the less than two years since, the Prescription Discount Card has resulted in community savings of more than \$4.5 million. That's all without any cost to County government or local taxpayers.

In fact, more than 100,000 prescriptions have been filled. Card holders have saved about 60% on average, which is about \$45 for each prescription. The Monroe County Prescription Discount Card is not a government solution. It's a people solution. And it works.

Last year at this address, I announced a new program called the Monroe County Dental Discount Card. Since that time, over 1,000 local families have signed up. Many, who at one time lacked access to proper dental coverage, are now enjoying reduced-cost, quality dental care, also at zero cost to local taxpayers. A win-win for our entire community, the Monroe County Dental Discount Program should give everyone a reason to smile.

In November, we were also proud to launch the new Monroe County Veterans Discount Card. It represents an innovative partnership between the Veterans Outreach Center, the Monroe County Veterans Service Agency, and our generous local business community.

Using the card, those who have served our nation in the Armed Forces have access to significant discounts and benefits at participating local vendors.

We can never fully repay our community's heroes for their service and sacrifice to this country. But the Veterans Discount Card is Monroe County's small way to support those who gave us the enduring gift of freedom.

To apply for the card, veterans or active duty military personnel need only visit the County Clerk's Office or the County Veterans Service Agency, or simply visit [monroecounty.gov](http://monroecounty.gov) for more information.

Monroe County Clerk Cheryl Dinolfo and the staff and leadership at the Veterans Outreach Center deserve our thanks and appreciation. I thank them all for their strong partnership.

Our local veterans know better than most that the work done by those to defend our nation is more important than ever before. The war on terror is far from over. Local governments have an increasingly important role to play in protecting our families and homes on American soil.

That means we must prepare for every scenario. For example, if armed terrorists were to travel by boat across Lake Ontario, taking aim for our community, would Monroe County be prepared?

It sounds farfetched, even improbable. But many tragedies, like the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, often do. If evil were to threaten us today, and those armed terrorists were to set their sights on shattering our sense of security, does Monroe County have a comprehensive plan to keep our homes and families safe?

The answer is yes, we do. The exact situation I just described was put to the test on May 10<sup>th</sup>.

The full-scale assessment of our local public safety capabilities was part of the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program, and represented a partnership between the Canadian Government, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, New York State, Monroe County, and the City of Rochester

Its purpose was to develop a coordinated response plan, in real time, for a waterborne terrorist threat to our area. The operation was one of the first of its kind in the entire country.

Northern Border Marine Operations joined with Monroe County public safety representatives from our Emergency Operations Center and the Monroe County Sheriff's Office. Almost every local public safety agency was involved at some level.

We will never be able to anticipate every unique threat to our community's well-being. But residents can count on the talent and dedication of local first responders. As a result of their commitment to excellence, Monroe County is one of the most prepared, best

equipped, and overall safest places in the nation when it comes to standing ready to expect the unexpected.

In the coming year, Monroe County will do even more to prepare for the unforeseen. Our Office of Emergency Management will continue a significant renovation project within our Emergency Operations Center. Enhanced audio, video, and communications capabilities will all do a great deal to improve what is already a unique state-of-the-art facility.

We learned during the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> that the ability of emergency personnel to communicate effectively is often a life or death proposition. To better protect our entire community, and all of our dedicated first-responders, Monroe County's Emergency Operations Center has installed interoperable critical incident management software that allows for the sharing of vital public safety response information in real time.

The County will also make this software available, free of charge, to all local municipalities, law enforcement agencies, fire departments, hospitals, and even area colleges and universities.

Monroe County Sheriff Patrick O'Flynn, Fire Bureau Coordinator Sam DeRosa, Public Safety Director Steve Bowman, and Fred Rion of the Monroe County Office of Emergency Management are all here with us tonight. Let's thank them, and the dedicated men and women they lead, for remaining vigilant around the clock.

Deb Sung is a resident of Queens, New York. I'd like to read a portion of a letter she recently sent to Monroe County government.

Deb writes, "I try not to buy plastic containers other than numbers one or two, but sometimes it's unavoidable - so I found myself with a slowly growing stash of numbers three through seven plastics. I've been trying to find a place that I could take them for recycling. After encountering dead ends right and left, I stumbled across your website today."

Along with her note, Deb sent us a large cardboard package. It was filled with all sorts of plastic items, including those marked with numbers three and seven and everything in between.

In fact, she spent her own money to send plastics she couldn't recycle at home in New York City to our County. Monroe County was one of the first in our area to expand our recycling program to include all plastics numbers one through seven. We were happy to accept the donation and the recognition as a County that leads by example.

A Queens resident who lives over 300 miles away now knows that when it comes to going green, Monroe County is on the cutting edge.

And it's not the first time we've been recognized for innovative sustainability efforts. In 2011, Monroe County was twice honored by the New York State Chapter of the American Public Works Association. Our state-of-the-art Crime Lab won the "Project of the Year" award for design and construction excellence, including an unprecedented LEED Platinum Certification.

Our groundbreaking EcoPark was also recognized for providing residents with a centralized, one-stop-drop recycling destination, using a unique public-private partnership that is now a national model.

Our EcoPark is centrally located. Residents can simply drive right in and be rid of all difficult-to-dispose-of items, like household hazardous waste, pharmaceutical waste, or even cell phones or printer cartridges. Like so many of the accomplishments that have poised us for greatness in 2012, our groundbreaking EcoPark is one of the first of its kind in the nation.

A community poised for greatness. A community doing great things. A community of great people doing great things.

The people in our Department of Environmental Services are making Monroe County an award winning, national leader in the development of green technologies. Thanks to Director Mike Garland and the entire team for their incredible vision and results.

This year Monroe County's website won a "Best of the Web" award for the 6<sup>th</sup> year in a row. Chief Information Officer Nelson Rivera and his team work tirelessly to ensure we are on the leading edge of open-government technology.

Our Department of Transportation is driven by Terry Rice. Two years ago, the official theme of this address was, "It's all about jobs." Since then, I'm always kidding Terry that "It's all about roads and bridges." But when it comes to quality of life, that is often the case. This year Monroe County achieved an overall "A" on our Regional Traffic Signal Report Card, issued by the National Transportation Operations Coalition. Congratulations to Terry and his team.

The leadership of Human Resources Director Brayton Connard also helped Monroe County win a 2012 Wealth of Health Award for large local employers. He and his team instituted a County workplace wellness program that has since reduced employee absenteeism by ten per cent.

There is no question that Monroe County's nearly 4,500 dedicated employees position us for greatness each and every day. In fact, Andy Sansone won the 2011 Conservationist of the Year Award from the Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District. Dr. Don Kamin received a Distinguished Service Award from the Rochester Police Department's Rosewood Club for excellence in mental health service. And, Mary Jo Healy earned the George W. Burke, Jr. Award for Safety from the Water Environment Federation.

We applaud them and we thank them.

Just two months ago Monroe County welcomed a new Director of Aviation. Prior to his retirement from the Navy, Mike Giardino was the 2<sup>nd</sup> in command officer at Naval Air Station Key West, in Florida. As a Commander, he directed day to day operations of the seven annex, 6,300 acre facility. That facility receives 20,000 visitors each year, and controls nearly 100,000 general flight operations.

Mike has deep roots in Monroe County as a graduate of Charlotte High School, MCC, and SUNY Brockport. I'm proud to have Mike on our team and in the audience tonight. He has done an outstanding job in his first few months on the job.

No doubt about it, we are in the midst of an exciting time at the Greater Rochester International Airport.

Delta Airlines recently added four daily non-stop flights to the New York City market, one of our most popular destinations. U.S. Airways is expanding and adding new direct flights to Charlotte and Philadelphia. And it was a remarkable win for our local traveling public when Southwest Airlines selected our community as one of only a select number of airports in America to receive maintained or expanded service as it continues its ongoing merger with AirTran.

Our airport is responsible for sustaining over 10,000 local jobs, generating nearly \$300 million in local income, and contributing more than \$800 million to the local economy each year. The Greater Rochester International Airport is more than just our "Gateway to the World." It's also a gateway to more jobs and a stronger local economy. That's a gateway that leads to a brighter future for all of Monroe County.

It's been said that excellence is not a destination. It is a continuous journey that never ends.

Since our humble beginnings as a County in 1821, we've been able to turn our greatest assets into promise and opportunity. There was a time when our community was built on agriculture, and flour was produced in our many mills. There was a day when the genius of George Eastman brought us the might of manufacturing, and decades of opportunity followed as we became the image capital of the world. Today, as an emerging idea-capital ready to jump head-first into greatness, we watch as contemporary local leaders use innovation and entrepreneurship to transform our economy right before our eyes.

Monroe County is indeed a community poised for greatness. And it was Winston Churchill who said the price of greatness is responsibility.

Our responsibilities are clear. A great community must support its employers to create and retain local jobs. A great community must have a government that balances its budget and lives within its means. A great community must promote and maintain a world-class quality of life. A great community is one where partnership triumphs over partisanship. And where collaboration is always the answer to its most pressing challenges.

That, my friends and neighbors, is the state of Monroe County in 2012.

Thank you and God Bless.

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