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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UNITY COALITION ANNOUNCES ITS KICK-OFF EVENT “RAISING THE CURTAIN ON UNITY”

The Unity Coalition, an alliance initiated by the New York State Division of Human Rights, Patchogue Mayor Paul Pontieri, Suffolk County Legislator Jack Eddington, New York State Assemblymember Patricia Eddington, community advocates and concerned residents of the Patchogue and Medford communities, announces its kick-off celebration of diversity event “Raising the Curtain on Unity” to take place on Monday April 20 at the Patchogue Theater for the Performing Arts starting at 7:00 pm. The spectacular event will include performances by cast members of the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical “In the Heights,” Patchogue-Medford High School students, a variety of acts by local musicians, dancers, and actors, and surprise guest appearances.

The Unity Coalition was initiated as a response to the bias-related murder of Marcelo Lucero in November, 2008. The Coalition’s mission is to promote a mutual understanding and respect among the members of the diverse communities in Suffolk County and to develop strategies to address bias and discrimination to avoid hate incidents.

Galen D. Kirkland, Commissioner of the New York State Division of Human Rights stated: “We commend the communities of Patchogue and Medford, and the members of the Unity Coalition for their efforts to make this event a reality. This is only the first of many initiatives that will ensure that the tragic death of Mr. Lucero educates our young people on the importance of diversity and mutual respect.”

Mayor Pontieri added: “As the Mayor of a very diverse and inclusive community I believe this event will help us realize that the things we have in common far outnumber those that divide us.”

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New York has the proud distinction of being the first state in the nation to enact a Human Rights Law, which affords every citizen "an equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life." The New York State Division of Human Rights was created to enforce this important law and does so through, among other things, the vigorous prosecution of unlawful discriminatory practices and the receipt, investigation, and resolution of complaints of discrimination. Please visit the Division's website at www.dhr.state.ny.us for additional information about the agency and its work.