

--- For Immediate Release ---

STATE OF NEW YORK
DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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***NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS SERVICE,
SUFFOLK COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
ASSEMBLYMEMBER PATRICIA A. EDDINGTON, SUFFOLK COUNTY
LEGISLATOR JACK EDDINGTON, AND VILLAGE OF PATCHOGUE
MAYOR PAUL V. PONTIERI ANNOUNCE FORMATION OF COMMUNITY-
BASED UNITY TASK FORCE TO ADDRESS COMMUNITY TENSIONS AND
IMPROVE RELATIONS***

Galen D. Kirkland, Commissioner of the New York State Division of Human Rights, Assemblymember Patricia A. Eddington, Suffolk County Legislator Jack Eddington, and Village of Patchogue Mayor Paul V. Pontieri, Jr., today announced the formation of a community based “Unity Task Force” to address community tensions and improve relations. The Unity Task Force was formed in response to the bias related murder of Marcelo Lucero on November 8, 2008 and is comprised of approximately forty members of the Patchogue/Medford communities. The initial working session of the Unity Task Force was held last evening at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Holtsville. The next meeting will take place in early January.

The Unity Task Force has established three working committees: Educating Young People; Educating Policy Makers; and Cultural Affairs/Media. Each working committee is

headed by a member of the Patchogue/Medford community and facilitated by staff from the Division of Human Rights, United States Department of Justice-Community Relations Service, Suffolk County Human Rights Commission, and offices of Assemblymember Eddington, Suffolk County Legislator Eddington, and Mayor Pontieri. Each of these working committees will formulate projects and community activities designed to increase community cohesion and understanding moving forward. The working committees will continue to organize their activities over the next month before reporting to the entire Task Force in early January 2009.

Commissioner Kirkland stated: “The Paterson Administration and Division of Human Rights are committed to working with local community residents in Suffolk County to ensure that something positive comes out of this senseless and tragic event. Our collaborative efforts are intended to bring Suffolk County together, and we hope all concerned citizens will join in our effort to support the constructive initiatives undertaken by the Unity Task Force.”

New York State Assemblymember Eddington added: “We look forward to working with the Division of Human Rights, Department of Justice-Community Relations Service, Suffolk County Human Rights Commission, Mayor Pontieri, and most importantly, members of *our* community to chart a course towards a more positive future.”

Suffolk County Legislator Jack Eddington added: “I wish to thank the Division of Human Rights for facilitating the creation the Unity Task Force and I was pleased to be a part of the initial meeting and the development of action plans to promote unity in our community”.

Mayor Paul V. Pontieri added: “The Unity Task Force and its community-based members are critical to the process of confronting the issues which need to be addressed to protect all the citizens of Suffolk County from acts of bigotry and hate.”

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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.