

**INSTALLATION AND REORGANIZATION MEETING
OF THE 2024 UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
COURTROOM OF THE HONORABLE LISA MIRALLES WALSH, ASSIGNMENT JUDGE
SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COUNTY OF UNION, 2 BROAD STREET, ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2024 AT SIX O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

The Honorable Lisa Miralles Walsh, Assignment Judge, Superior Court of the County of Union, offered welcoming remarks and introduced the Honorable Nicholas P. Scutari, New Jersey State Senate President, Chairman of the Union County Democratic Committee and Master of Ceremonies, who called the Installation Ceremony to order.

2024 INSTALLATION CEREMONY OF UNION COUNTY

WELCOME

Honorable Lisa Miralles Walsh,
Assignment Judge, Superior Court,
County of Union

The Honorable Lisa Miralles Walsh welcomed everyone to Union County's Board of Commissioners 2024 Installation and Reorganization Meeting. She recognized NJ State Senate President and U.C. Democratic Committee Chairman Nicholas P. Scutari, and State Senator Joseph P. Cryan as well as all the other elected officials and distinguished guest and thanked them for attending the evening's ceremony. She also recognized her esteemed colleague sitting to her right Honorable Judge Cassandra A. Corbett. She noted that she was happy and honored to be able to welcome everyone to her courtroom once again and she extended her congratulations to everyone being honored that evening and thanked them for their unwavering commitment to public service. The Honorable Lisa Miralles Walsh turned the meeting over to the Master of Ceremonies, the Honorable Nicholas P. Scutari and thanked him for allowing her to be a part of the 2024 Installation and Reorganization Meeting for the Union County Board of County Commissioners.

The Honorable Lisa Miralles Walsh, Assignment Judge, Superior Court of the County of Union, offered welcoming remarks and introduced the Honorable Nicholas P. Scutari, New Jersey State Senate President, Chairman of the Union County Democratic Committee and Master of Ceremonies, who called the Installation Ceremony to order.

OPENING REMARKS

Honorable Nicholas P. Scutari, New Jersey Senate
President, and Chairman of the Union County
Democratic Committee

The Honorable Nicholas P. Scutari, NJ Senate President Union County Democratic Committee Chairman welcomed everyone to the 2024 Installation Ceremony of the Union County Board of County Commissioners, noting that it was an honor and privilege to once again serve as the Masters of Ceremonies on this special day. He noted that his success and efforts would not be possible without the help and support of Union County and the many distinguished guests in attendance.

PRESENTATION OF THE COLORS

Union County Sheriff Peter Corvelli

POSTING OF THE COLORS

Union County Sheriff Honor Guard

The Presentation and Posting of the Colors was performed by the Union County Sheriff's Honor Guard, led by Union County Sheriff Peter Corvelli.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE &
SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

Honorable Peter Corvelli,
Union County Sheriff

Union County Sheriff Peter Corvelli led the Pledge of Allegiance.

RECOGNITION OF HONORED GUESTS

Honorable Nicholas P. Scutari, New Jersey State
Senate President, and Chairman of the Union County
Democratic Committee

NJ Senate President Scutari recognized several distinguished guests in attendance, including: NJ Senator Joseph P. Cryan; NJ State Representative Donald Payne; General Assembly members Linda Carter, James J. Kennedy, Annette Quijano, and Reverend Reginald Atkins; Constitutional Officers Sheriff Peter Corvelli, Clerk Joanne Rajoppi, and Surrogate Christopher Hudak.

Clerk of the Board Pellettiere recognized (most of) the elected officials from the 21 municipalities that were present, including but not limited to: Mayor Donald Shaw of Roselle; Mayor Manuel Figueiredo of Union; Mayor Elizabeth Fagan of Summit; Councilman Frank J. Cuesta of Elizabeth; Councilman John Francis Roman of Linden; and Councilwoman Joanna Miles of Rahway.

NJ Senate President wished everyone a Happy New Year and turned the meeting over to County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi for the Certifications of Elections.

CERTIFICATIONS OF ELECTION

Honorable Joanne Rajoppi,
Union County Clerk

The Honorable Joanne Rajoppi, Union County Clerk, recognized NJ Senate President Nicholas P. Scutari and the other distinguished guests in attendance. She thanked Assignment Judge Lisa Miralles Walsh for hosting the evenings meeting.

Peter Corvelli, Union County Sheriff

County Clerk Rajoppi read the Certification of Election of Peter Corvelli, certifying that Peter Corvelli had received the highest number of votes and had been duly elected to a term of three

years to the Office of Union County Sheriff at the General Election on Tuesday, November 7th, 2023.

Lourdes M. Leon, Union County Commissioner
Joseph C. Bodek, Union County Commissioner
Michèle S. Delisfort, Union County Commissioner

County Clerk Rajoppi read the Certification of Election of Commissioners Lourdes M. Leon, Joseph C. Bodek, and Michèle S. Delisfort to the Union County Board of Commissioners. County Clerk Rajoppi certified that Commissioners Lourdes M. Leon, Joseph C. Bodek, and Michèle S. Delisfort had received the highest number of votes and were duly elected to a term of three years as Commissioners of the Board of Union County Commissioners at the General Election on Tuesday, November 7, 2023.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE OATH OF OFFICE TO SHERIFF PETER CORVELLI
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NJ Senate President Scutari spoke relative to Sheriff Corvelli, noting that he had approximately 25 years of law enforcement experience, including three decades with the Hillside Police Department. He also noted Sheriff Corvelli's time on the Borough Council for the Borough of Kenilworth.

The Honorable Senate President Nicholas P. Scutari introduced Union County Sheriff Peter Corvelli and called upon the Honorable Joseph P. Cryan, New Jersey State Senator, 20th District, to administer the Oath of Office to Sheriff Corvelli.

Holding the Bible for Sheriff Corvelli were his wife Kelly, joined by his two daughters, Alyssa and Rylee.

Sheriff Corvelli offered his remarks.

Sheriff Corvelli thanked State Senator Cryan for swearing him in as well as Judge Miralles Walsh for graciously hosting the County's Reorganization Meeting. He noted that he was humbled by being elected by the residents of Union County to serve another term as Sheriff. He recognized his wife, Kelly, and daughters, Alyssa and Rylee, and thanked them for their unyielding love, support, and encouragement. He also recognized the Board of Union County Commissioners and thanked them for their support and continued partnership. He noted his Office's commitment to professionalism and courtesy in ensuring the safety of all Union County residents. He also noted the Office's focus on community engagement, outreach and accessibility as a means to increase and maintain a high level of operational efficiency and ensure a safer, more connected future. He closed by once again thanking everyone for their support and the opportunity to continue serving as Union County Sheriff.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE OATH OF OFFICE TO COMMISSIONER LOURDES M. LEON
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NJ Senate President Scutari spoke relative to Commissioner Leon, noting her dedication to community and volunteerism long before becoming a public servant. He advised that she was the first Latina to serve on the Union County Board of Commissioners and recognized her as an award-winning educator in the City of Elizabeth, having worked her way from a teacher's aide to principal, prior to her retirement in 2013. He noted that he and Elizabeth Mayor Bollwage could think of no one better to serve and congratulated her on her second term as Union County Commissioner.

The Honorable Senate President Nicholas P. Scutari introduced Union County Commissioner Lourdes M. Leon and called upon the Honorable Mayor J. Christian Bollwage to administer the Oath of Office to Commissioner Leon.

Holding the Bible for Commissioner Leon were her nephews, Christopher and Nicholas Leon, joined by her brother, José Leon, sister in law Patricia Kirk Leon, and her mother, Olga Leon.

Commissioner Leon offered her remarks.

Commissioner Leon thanked Mayor Bollwage for swearing her in. She welcomed everyone to the evening's Reorganization Meeting, adding that she was honored and humbled to have been elected to a second term as County Commissioner. She thanked her mother for her love and unyielding support, recognizing her mother's wisdom and resilience as the driving force that shaped her life and inspired her to pursue a career as an educator. She also paid tribute to her father, recognizing him as her eternal best friend and the person that was always willing to tell her about the hard truths of life. She thanked both of her parents for their tremendous sacrifice in migrating to the United States and affording her the American dream. She thanked the rest of her family for their unconditional love and support. She expressed her gratitude to the residents of Union County for their continued support and pledged her commitment to creating a Union County that satisfied the needs of the present while also preparing for the challenges of the future.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE OATH OF OFFICE TO COMMISSIONER JOSEPH C. BODEK
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NJ Senate President Scutari noted that it was his honor to be able to swear in Joseph C. Bodek to the office of Union County Commissioner. He spoke relative to Commissioner Bodek's commitment to public service, noting a four-decade career in local government services in addition to serving as Clerk of the Union County Utilities Authority for over 30 years. He noted that Commissioner Bodek was a man with a steady hand and a driving force in the City of Linden. He also recognized Commissioner Bodek's ability to work across party lines, adding that he and Linden Mayor Armstead could think of no one better to serve on the Union County Board of Commissioners.

The Honorable Senate President Nicholas P. Scutari introduced Union County Commissioner Joseph C. Bodek and administered the Oath of Office to Commissioner Bodek.

Holding the Bible for Commissioner Bodek were his wife, Christine, joined by their three granddaughters, Adalyn Gene Rivera, Aria Grace Rivera, and Evelyn Mary Bodek.

Commissioner Bodek offered his remarks.

Commissioner Bodek recognized NJ Senate President Scutari and thanked him for his many years of friendship. He also thanked Linden Mayor Derek Armstead for supporting his candidacy for Union County Commissioner. He noted that he was honored and humbled by the opportunity to serve the residents of Union County in his new capacity as County Commissioner. He thanked the residents of Union County for their vote of confidence, adding that he was committed to collaborative efforts to ensure the betterment of Union County. He noted Union County as a place of resilience, diversity and opportunity, adding that it was important for local government to reflect these values. He pledged to work tirelessly for the residents of Union County to provide opportunities for success. To close, he thanked everyone for their continued support including, his children Joseph and Beth Anne, children-in-law- Claudia and Joseph, and his granddaughters Adalyn, Aria, and Evelyn.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE OATH OF OFFICE TO COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE S. DELISFORT

NJ Senate President Scutari congratulated Commissioner Delisfort on being elected to the Board of Union County Commissioners, recognizing her as the first Haitian-American to serve as Mayor of the Township of Union. In addition to having a Master's Degree in City and Regional Planning from Rutgers University. NJ Senate President Scutari advised that Commissioner Delisfort also had a wealth of experience as a licensed professional planner and owner her own urban planning consulting firm. He added that she also served as Chairperson to NJ's Chapter of American Planning Association Redevelopment Planning Committee. He welcomed Commissioner Delisfort, noting that he looked forward to having her expertise on the Union County Commissioner Board.

The Honorable Senate President Nicholas P. Scutari introduced Union County Commissioner Michèle S. Delisfort and called upon the Honorable Judge Cassandra A. Corbett, Municipal Court Presiding Judge, Vicinage 12, to administer the Oath of Office to Commissioner Delisfort.

Holding the Bible for Commissioner Delisfort were her son, Ahmael Alexander, joined by her parents, Guy and Suzette Delisfort.

Commissioner Delisfort offered her remarks.

Commissioner Delisfort thanked everyone present for attending the evening's meeting. She noted that she was both honored and privileged to serve the wonderful residents of Union County in her new capacity as Union County Commissioner. She recognized her son Ahmael, and her parents, Guy and Suzette, and thanked them for their unyielding love and support. She acknowledge the host of phenomenal friends in attendance and thanked them for their support and encouragement throughout her journey as a public servant. She noted that her values as a public official were rooted in diversity inclusivity and the relentless pursuit of progress. She emphasized the importance of strong local leadership in maintaining stability and unity during challenging times. She added that residents looked to local leaders not only as policy makers, but stewards of their quality of life. She pledged to prioritize the needs and concerns of residents, noting her commitment to transparency, accountability and upholding the values of her sworn office. She spoke relative to her experience in city and regional planning, adding that she looked forward to using her knowledge skills and background to help Union County evolve and prosper in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

INSTALLATION CLOSING REMARKS

CLOSING REMARKS

Honorable Nicholas P. Scutari, New Jersey State
Senate President, and Chairman of the Union County
Democratic Committee

The Honorable New Jersey State Senate President and Union County Democratic Committee Chairman Nicholas P. Scutari thanked everyone for attending that evening's Installation Ceremony and Reorganization Meeting of the 2024 Board of County Commissioners and then turned the meeting over to Clerk of the Board, James E. Pellettiere.



HONORED GUESTS

The Honorable Lisa Miralles Walsh, Assignment Judge, Superior Court of the County of Union

The Honorable Judge Cassandra A. Corbett, Municipal Court Presiding Judge, Vicinage 12

The Honorable New Jersey Senate President Nicholas P. Scutari, 22nd Legislative District

Federal Elected Officials

The Honorable New Jersey Representative Donald Payne, 10th Congressional District

State Elected Officials

The Honorable New Jersey Senator Joseph P. Cryan, 20th Legislative District

The Honorable Assemblywoman Annette Quijano, 20th Legislative District

The Honorable New Jersey Assemblyman Rev. Reginald W. Atkins, 20th Legislative District

The Honorable New Jersey Assemblywoman Linda Carter, 22nd Legislative District

The Honorable New Jersey Assemblyman James Kennedy, 22nd Legislative District

County Elected Officials

The Honorable Union County Sheriff Peter Corvelli
The Honorable Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi
The Honorable Union County Surrogate Christopher Hudak

Local Elected Officials

Mayor J. Christian Bollwage, City of Elizabeth
Councilwoman Patricia Perkins-Auguste, City of Elizabeth
Councilman Frank J. Cuesta, City of Elizabeth
Councilman Manny Grova, City of Elizabeth
Councilman Carlos Torres, City of Elizabeth
Councilwoman Lisa Ormon, City of Linden
Councilman Barry Javick, City of Linden
Councilman Alfred Mohammed, City of Linden
Councilman Carlos Rivas, City of Linden
Councilman John Francis Roman, City of Linden
Councilman Ralph Strano, City of Linden
Councilman Mark Armstead, City of Linden
Mayor Raymond Giacobbe, City of Rahway
Councilwoman Danielle “Danni” Newbury, City of Rahway
Councilwoman Joanna Miles, City of Rahway
Councilman Jeffrey Brooks, City of Rahway
Councilman Dave Brown, City of Rahway
Councilman Jeremy Mojica, City of Rahway
Mayor Donald Shaw, Borough of Roselle
Councilwoman Denise Wilkerson, Borough of Roselle
Councilwoman Cindy Thomas, Borough of Roselle
Councilwoman Isabel Sousa, Borough of Roselle
Mayor Manuel Figueiredo, Township of Union
Deputy Mayor Joe Florio, Township of Union
Committeeman James Louis, Township of Union
Committeewoman Patricia Guerra-Frazier, Township of Union

Mayor Elizabeth Fagan, City of Summit
Councilman Michael J. Dardia, Town of Westfield

Non-Elected Honored Guest

President Lamonte Repollett, Kean University

Ben Steinberg

Jessica and Brian Steinberg

2024 REORGANIZATION MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
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CALL TO ORDER

The Clerk of the Board called the reorganization meeting to order.

ROLL CALL

The Clerk of the Board called the roll.

Roll call showed Commissioner James E. Baker, Jr, Commissioner Joseph C. Bodek, Commissioner Michèle S. Delisfort Commissioner Sergio Granados, Commissioner Bette Jane Kowalski, Commissioner Lourdes M. Leon, Commissioner Alexander Mirabella, Commissioner Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded were present, with Commissioner Rebecca Williams with absent.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

The Clerk of the Board read the Open Public Meetings Act.

ELECTION OF A CHAIR OF THE 2024 BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

The first order of business was the election of a Chair of the Board of County Commissioners for the year 2024.

The Clerk of the Board called for a nomination for the election of a Chair Pro-Tem of the Board of County Commissioners for the year 2024.

On a motion made by Commissioner Delisfort and seconded by Commissioner Baker, roll call showed eight votes in the affirmative relative to the nomination of Sergio Granados as Chair Pro-Tem for 2024, with Commissioner Williams absent.

Chair Pro-Tem Granados wished everyone a happy and prosperous 2024. He recognized County Manager Oatman, Deputy County Manager Wagner, and the rest of the Union County staff for their continued efforts and commitment to public service.

Chair Pro-Tem Sergio Granados called for nominations for the election of a Chair of the Board of County Commissioners for the year 2024.

Commissioner Mirabella noted that it was his honor and privilege to nominate Commissioner Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded to serve as 2024 Chairwoman of the Union County Commissioner Board.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Baker, roll call showed eight votes in the affirmative in favor of Commissioner Palmieri Mouded to serve as 2024 Chairwoman, with Commissioner Williams absent.

Chair Pro-Tem Sergio Granados introduced 2024 Chairwoman Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded and called upon her father, former Union County Freeholder Ed Palmieri, to ceremoniously administer her Oath of Office.

Holding the Bible for Chairwoman Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded was her husband, George Mouded.

ELECTION OF A VICE CHAIR OF THE 2024 BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
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The next order of business was the election of a Vice Chair of the Board of County Commissioners for the year 2024.

Chairwoman Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded called for nominations for the election of a Vice Chair of the Board of County Commissioners for the year 2024.

Commissioner Kowalski noted that it was her honor and pleasure to nominate Commissioner colleague and friend, Commissioner Lourdes Leon, to serve as 2024 Vice Chairwoman of the Union County Commissioner Board.

On a motion made by Commissioner Kowalski and seconded by Commissioner Baker, roll call showed eight votes in the affirmative in favor of Commissioner Leon to serve as 2024 Vice Chairwoman, with Commissioner Williams absent. .



Chairwoman Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded introduced the 2024 Vice Chairwoman Lourdes M. Leon, and called upon the Honorable Senate President Nicholas P. Scutari to administer her Oath of Office.

Holding the Bible for Vice Chairwoman Leon were her nephews, Christopher and Nicholas Leon.

CHAIRWOMAN'S ANNUAL MESSAGE

Chairwoman Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded delivered the Chairwoman's Annual Message.

Chairwoman Palmieri-Mouded addressed the public:

Good evening elected officials, family, friends, and residents of Union County. Thank you for joining me at this year's Re-Organization Meeting. It is a great honor to stand before you as the Chairwoman for 2024.

If you know me or follow me, you know that typically I have my daughter on my hip and my eyes are scanning the crowd to make sure my sons are behaving! At times, I think to myself- I may not be putting my most professional self forward, I am also often reminded that I have this great opportunity to be a representation of the many women of our county that balance a career, while raising their children. Tonight, I sent my kids home before the meeting started, but I do want to thank you all for endearing them. I love having them participate in the great goings on of our county, but I also like to expose them to the tougher stuff in the hopes that they will be inspired, as

I was by my parents, to give back and serve our community. My dad, a former freeholder, my mom a lifelong nurse who worked tirelessly for the county during Covid and both join me here tonight. They, along with my mother-in-law, extended family and friends, and of course, my husband George are the ones that believe in me, support me and say yes to any ask I have ever have. I am beyond grateful for all of you.

I would also like to express special appreciation to Senate President Nicholas Scutari for joining us today and for always advocating for Union County. Throughout the year, his efforts have secured millions of dollars for various initiatives, ranging from, but not limited to: mental health and the revitalization of our Clark Reservoir and new Skating Rink. These contributions will undoubtedly have a significant and positive impact on enhancing the quality of life for our residents.

Thank you to my fantastic Commissioner colleagues for your confidence in me, I am certain we are going to have a great year. And a big thank you to our County Manager, Ed Oatman, for all of his hard work and dedication, working alongside Deputy County Manager Amy Wagner, our County Directors, Constitutional Officers and employees - who make up our Union County family.

*Today, I am excited to unveil a set of initiatives under the theme “**Growing Together in Union County,**” that will be implemented in the coming year. Union County has always been made up of diverse lives, stories, and aspirations. And the strength of our community comes from the connections between its county government and its residents. As we are all well aware, technology is all around us and ever-changing.*

The initial phase of my vision, centers on enhancing connectivity through the introduction of a new app and a revitalized website. By incorporating innovative tools, residents will enjoy convenient access to the information they seek most - right at their fingertips. From County events and park locations, to trail maps, park area reservations, sports field locations, fillable forms, interactive maps, and program details—there will be something for everyone in our comprehensive platform - helping to bridge gaps, enhance communication, and create a more connected community. We envision a Union County where residents, young and old, are equipped with the knowledge and resources to actively engage within our dynamic county.

Our seniors are the foundation of our community and in my next set of initiatives, I am excited to introduce senior enrichment programs, designed to cater to the well-being and enjoyment of our senior community members. Our first program is a senior social program, which will focus on providing seniors with opportunities to gather and socialize through a variety of monthly activities.

From movies, sports, painting, crafts, computer lessons, cooking, restaurant dining, and more, our seniors can engage in events that not only build friendships but also encourage staying active and connected. Furthermore, we would like to introduce senior swim lessons. The demand for adult swim lessons became evident following the success of the free children's swim lessons implemented last year.

We would like to once again partner with our stakeholders to offer free swim lessons for seniors, utilizing our own county pool. These classes will be designed to address seniors' unique needs, focusing on water safety, swimming techniques, and exercises to enhance strength.

In our ongoing commitment to senior well-being, we will present the Seniors Against Scams Program. This educational series covers financial safety, social media scams, phone scams, and more, empowering older adults with the knowledge and strategies to protect themselves. While we recognize the importance of developing social connections and engagement through our diverse senior programs, I want to shift our focus to another crucial aspect of well-being — mental health.

Furthering our commitment to comprehensive care, we understand that mental health is a vital component of overall wellness, and each year we try to create even more programs that reflect this dedication to the health of our community. This year, we are introducing the Train the Trainer Mental Health Program. Similar to First Aid and CPR, Mental Health First Aid equips individuals to assist those facing mental health or substance use issues, providing support in both crisis and non-crisis situations.

This initiative strives to encourage a community to be well-informed and ready to address mental health challenges, enabling individuals to support family, friends, or neighbors in times of need. Building on the foundation of empowering our residents through lifelong learning, we turn our focus to support and equity and it is essential to highlight the significant strides we are making to champion the role of women in our community. Notably, you can see that our commitment to gender diversity is exemplified by the current presence of a female majority Commissioner Board, which furthers the promotion of excellence and being inclusive.

As a proud, devoted working mother, and a strong advocate for women, one initiative I am happy to announce is the re-launch of the Union County Commission on the Status of Women. This revitalized initiative highlights our commitment to supporting the rights and opportunities of all women in our county, establishing a robust platform for empowerment, advocacy, and collective progress. The commission's emphasis will be on recognizing women of excellence, grant funding, programs and events as well as formulating policy recommendations that echoes our commitment to providing women with the necessary resources and opportunities for their thriving success.

Keeping in line with our commitment to “growing together,” the final focus of my vision this year revolves around something close to my heart—family connections. Given my large family with children spanning from various ages, each with unique needs ranging from sports and activities to academics and personal development, I know the importance of adopting and maintaining programs that create active engagement, continuous learning, and diversity countywide.

This year, we would like to partner with our local, esteemed educational institutions to offer a dynamic reading and tutoring program. This program will help to empower children to enhance their reading skills and receive support in subjects where needed, promoting confidence and readiness for the upcoming school year.

We are also pleased to announce an expansion of youth programs designed to more actively involve younger students. This initiative will provide opportunities for young people to gather and share their interests, concerns, and perspectives within Union County's youth population.

Additionally, these programs will serve as a platform for our connectivity initiative, offering a chance for civic engagement. Participants will have the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with our County Commissioners and contribute valuable insights, further strengthening our community relations. Building on our commitment to being inclusive, we recognize the importance of ensuring that every member of the family, regardless of ability, can fully enjoy our public spaces.

This year, we want to introduce a mobile sensory unit at County events, although specifically designed for individuals who are sensitive to loud noises, such as those on the autism spectrum, this service welcomes individuals of all abilities. The soundproof van, equipped with sensory games, aims to regulate reactions to external stimuli, providing a space for relaxation and ensuring families can participate in events seamlessly.

We will also introduce aquatic wheelchairs, promoting equal recreational opportunities at both our pool and spray park. Also known as pool access wheelchairs, they facilitate safe and comfortable movement in and around water, ensuring an inclusive environment for all residents to enjoy water-based activities without limitations.

For my last component of family connections - it is an initiative that I was personally inspired by over the course of the summer during one of our Commissioner's meetings. A young resident named Ben Steinberg, who was joined by his parents and his twin brother Nathan, was recognized at one of meetings. His resilience, advocacy, and compassion not only left a lasting impact on his own town but also left a heavy mark on me. Ben, who navigates life with cerebral palsy, transformed his disability into a catalyst for positive change. Observing a lack of books featuring individuals with physical disabilities in his school's library, he embarked on a mission to establish a "disability section." With determination and support, Ben successfully helped his school raise \$5000 for this cause, and the library now proudly hosts this section.

It was Ben's story that served as the inspiration for my literacy initiative, which promotes understanding and empathy among youth. And I would like to take a moment to welcome and recognize Ben, who is with us tonight!!! In collaboration with the 116 Union County public elementary schools, we will be introducing inclusive books in libraries in all of them. This collection will encompass a diverse range of books addressing disabilities and promoting inclusion and diversity, ensuring that every student of all abilities and backgrounds have access to materials that broaden their understanding of acceptance and other various topics.

*These examples only touch the surface of our ambitious 2024 - so stay tuned throughout the year as we unveil more plans. Our commitment to breaking barriers, opening doors, and building the county our residents deserve remains firm. So as we embark on this journey of "**Growing Together in Union County**," let us continue to work together for a better Union County, where the bonds of community grow stronger and the seeds of progress are sown for generations to come.*

I want to thank the Board of County Commissioners, County Manager and constitutional officers for their commitment in delivering real results for the residents of Union County.

RECESS

Chairwoman Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded called for a motion to recess.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed eight votes in the affirmation, with Commissioner Williams absent.