

# NEWS



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## 03-09-11 THIS WEEK IN ORANGE COUNTY BY EDWARD A. DIANA

Last week I presented the annual State of the County address to the Orange County Legislature. I am happy to share with you, as I did with the legislators, that the state of our County remains strong, healthy, and ready for the challenges ahead. This despite some very serious financial issues that loom around us -- our nation continues to be in the midst of a fiscal crisis and is \$14 trillion in debt; New York State has a \$10 billion budget gap; and 80 percent of the Orange County property tax levy is consumed by nine New York State mandates!

Under these extremely difficult circumstances, which are outside of our control here in Orange County, I have at times been forced to make hard, and sometimes unpopular, policy decisions in order to keep our County solvent and on the right track for future growth and development. Our fiscal prudence has paid off and I am proud to say that Orange County has a balanced budget for 2011 that reduces taxes by \$4 million. More good news, our Aaa Bond Rating from Moody's Investor Services has been reaffirmed, confirming our County's strong financial position.

This past year saw many significant accomplishments on behalf of Orange County residents. Our financial house is in order, our public safety efforts are second to none, and our commitment to our overall quality of life remains a top priority of this administration. To see the entire text of the 2011 State of the County address, view it online at [www.orangecountygov.com](http://www.orangecountygov.com).

Soon, many of us will celebrate St. Patrick's Day with our family and friends. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, is credited with bringing Christianity to the island. To coincide with the celebration of St. Patrick's Day, March has been proclaimed National Irish-American Heritage month by the President and Congress, as they have every year since 1995. It's my pleasure to join with them by proclaiming March Irish-American Heritage month here in Orange County. I'm proud to salute the many contributions of Irish-Americans and the integral role they have played in the history of our country.

Since the founding of our great nation, Irish immigrants have helped lay the foundations for our democracy and shown great courage in the defense of American freedom -- from the Revolution to the conflicts of today. Many made great sacrifices as they left their homeland and played a key role in establishing our nation's infrastructure and enriching our culture.

You may not be aware that March is also Brain Injury Awareness month. This is an issue of critical importance, especially to the health and well-being of our young people. Brain injury, which includes concussions, is the leading cause of death and disability for young people in the United States. Every 40 seconds an American youth enters an emergency room with a new brain injury; more than 80,000 young people are hospitalized by these injuries; and, tragically, more than 11,000 American youth die due to a brain injury. As a former coach and physical education teacher, I urge you to make sure that your children and athletes wear the appropriate head gear and protective equipment to avoid becoming one of these statistics. To learn more about brain injury, and what can be done to prevent it, visit the Brain Injury Association of America's website at [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org).

Until next week, wishing you good health and happiness.

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