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**Remarks made by Michael G. Breslin, Albany County Executive
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As a lawyer for over three decades, I know very well the difficult job you do. I spent many years working with probation officers and have seen, first hand, the effort that you invest to try to make the criminal justice system work.

You are truly concerned not simply with public safety, but about the lives of the people who get caught up in the criminal justice system. In your role as probation officers, whether you are doing pre-sentence evaluations or carrying out the terms of probation, you are always looking for ways to do your job better – to find better ways of identifying risks or better ways of forming new connections with other agencies such as police departments, schools, drug and alcohol treatment centers, mental health resources or job training.

In spite of the many times your hopes and aspirations for probationers may be dashed (often by the very conduct of the probationer) you retain an eternal optimism that each individual deserves the opportunity to mend their ways and make a productive life.

In county government, we serve all the less fortunate members of our community – from the abandoned, neglected and abused children to the frail and ill elderly who can no longer fend for themselves. Most of the people we serve are victims of life circumstances beyond their control. The people you work with are viewed as being responsible for their predicament and therefore deserving of little, if any help or consideration. Your optimism, demonstrated each and every day, goes beyond the often reflexive public reaction to “lock ‘em up and forget ‘em.” Each day, you swim upstream to assist those under your charge to make a better life, to take advantage of every opportunity and to become productive citizens. No one counts the lives that you have helped turn around. Indeed, you are often unaware of many of the successes you are responsible for. Yet, your impact has been and continues to be huge.

You always have your eyes open for those critical moments where you can protect the public when security is a risk. Albany County Probation Officer Sharon Tabone’s vigilance and sensitivity allowed her to neutralize a situation where a young boy was carrying a loaded gun in his neighborhood. Yet, you also keep that wary eye out for the opportunities that allow people in your charge to turn their lives around. If it wasn’t for your sensitivity and awareness, many more people would surely wander from the course of their rehabilitation.

I salute you for the tremendous contributions you make to society regularly, quietly, daily, and one individual at a time. You are beacons to us all, illuminating the darkness to allow us to see and help those struggling find a better, more productive life. There are no others who can and stay ready to light that way.

