



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

Senator Shelley Mayer Recognizes Four Local Businesses With New York State Empire Awards for Community Dedication

SENATOR SHELLEY MAYER November 28, 2023

| ISSUE: **EMPIRE AWARDS**

(Westchester, New York) - New York State Senator Shelley B. Mayer awarded four local businesses with the New York State Empire Award.

The New York State Empire Award honors and showcases small businesses and nonprofit organizations that make a positive impact on their communities. New York State Senate District 37 is home to many exceptional businesses and small nonprofit organizations that improve the quality of life and help build civic life and connections in the community by providing food, culture, spaces to gather, or by directly helping others in need.

New York State Senator Shelley B. Mayer said, “I am proud that Westchester is home to so many businesses and organizations that are steadfast in their dedication to their communities. Each business or organization that I have had the pleasure of honoring has helped bring our community closer in extraordinary ways. They offer diverse services, but they share a spirit of unity and positivity that can be felt throughout the municipalities that make up our District. I am grateful to each one for their generosity and commitment to their community.”

The Blue Heart Forever Project (BHFP) was established in 2017 by Lynda Hernandez DeGomez who saw a dire need for a support system for Latino families of children with autism in special education in the Village of Port Chester. Lynda organized and brought families together to support and help advocate for one another. In addition to offering support groups, BHFP maintains a list of community resources, advocates at community events, and recommends programs for children based on the specific support needs for each child. BHFP has made a profound and positive impact on many Latino families as it continues to grow as an organization.

Lynda Hernandez DeGomez, Founder of the Blue Heart Forever Project, said, “We are a Special Education support group for Hispanic families in Port Chester. We appreciate this recognition from Senator Shelley Mayer because it motivates us to continue supporting and educating the Hispanic community. We also thank all the organizations that support us in different areas for the progress of the group and especially that of our children.”

Laughing Horse Coffee & Tea Co. is a coffee shop in Harrison, NY where people of all ages can gather and feel a sense of community. All of Laughing Horse’s coffee is ethically sourced, their dairy products come from New York State dairies, and their baked goods and treats come from local bakeries. It is the kind of place where the person behind the counter will recognize you and know your “usual.” Laughing Horse also provides a warm and upbeat space where community members can work, relax, watch local musicians and entertainers, or take part in open mic nights. Laughing Horse was nominated for being a new, friendly and much-needed gathering space for the Harrison Community.

Mike and Ali Nazzaro, owners of Laughing Horse Coffee & Tea Co. said, “It’s an honor for Laughing Horse Coffee and Tea to receive a New York State Senate 2023 Empire Award! We love what Senator Shelley Mayer has done for the community and being recognized by her is wonderful. We love serving the Westchester area and being part of this incredible and

vibrant neighborhood to live in.”

The Kitchen Table is a farm-to-table restaurant in Pound Ridge, NY that has become a centerpiece in the community not only for its excellent food and drink, but for its welcoming atmosphere and encouragement of inclusion. The Kitchen Table regularly hosts trivia nights, features local entertainers and artists, and is a spot where local elected officials can discuss issues with their constituents. The Kitchen Table also serves as an organizing hub where multiple pop-up charities have hosted events whose proceeds have gone to organizations within the community. The Kitchen Table was nominated for the variety of services it has provided to the Pound Ridge community and for its continued devotion to promoting diversity and equity.

Daphne Everett, owner of The Kitchen Table, said, "Next April The Kitchen Table will celebrate our 10th year in business in Pound Ridge. When we opened we wanted to create a place where people in town could gather and talk and get to know one another - to build community. We are most grateful for the continuing support we have had from local residents and hope we have made life in Pound Ridge a little bit better. We are so lucky to live in an incredible place and are thrilled to be participants in the life of our town. We are very honored to receive the Empire Award from Senator Shelley Mayer and to know that our efforts to build community have had an impact. We're looking forward to the next 10 years! Thank you Senator Mayer!!!!"

Prana Prenatal Yoga offers support, guidance and a sense of community for women going through pregnancy, childbirth and new motherhood. Offering prenatal and postnatal classes and workshops, Prana Prenatal Yoga was nominated for their important work in Westchester and beyond, for providing physical and mental health resources to all individuals, and for supporting women through their pregnancy, childbirth and parenting experiences.

Marissa Goulbourne, Prana Prenatal Yoga, said, “We are so grateful to be a trusted and valuable resource for expecting and new families in Westchester. It was truly humbling to have Senator Mayer share with us direct quotes she received from various community members, expressing the positive impact Prana has had on their lives. We look forward to growing through collaborations with organizations such as NYMilk Bank to continue serving Westchester’s perinatal community.”