



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeremy A. Cooney

Senator Cooney Hosts Special Awards Ceremony at Eastman Theatre

JEREMY A. COONEY November 28, 2023

| ISSUE: [ROCHESTER COMMUNITY](#), [EMPIRE AWARDS](#), [NYS SENATE COMMENDATION AWARD](#)



Senator Cooney Stands with Winter Award Honorees

Honorees included 2023 Veterans Hall of Fame inductee and over a dozen local Empire Award and Commendation recipients

(**ROCHESTER, NY**) - Tonight, November 28th, **Senator Jeremy Cooney (D-Rochester)** hosted a Special Awards Ceremony honoring many local leaders and business owners. This ceremony included the induction of his 2023 Veterans Hall of Fame honoree, Yashira Rodriguez. He also

presented a proclamation to Clement Chung in celebration of his recently completed 144 mile run around Monroe County raising funds and awareness for AutismUp. Proclamations honor constituents and organizations who have accomplished something significant and have earned recognition.

Senator Cooney's 2023 Veterans Hall of Fame inductee is Yashira Rodriguez, an eight year military veteran who now dedicates her life to supporting other veterans. Yashira works as the Manager of Talent Strategy Programs and Veterans Connect at the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce. There she recruits current Active Duty, or recent Veterans, to highly technical jobs that require skills and training they received in the military that are transferable to these private sector positions. She also serves on the Veterans Outreach Center Board of Directors. The New York State Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame was created to honor and recognize outstanding veterans from the Empire State who have distinguished themselves both in military and civilian life.

Following Yashira's induction, the Senator awarded five Commendations to local leaders such as Ann Costello, Judge Karen Morris and Dr. Janice Harbin. Senator Cooney presented a proclamation to Clement Chung who recently completed a 144-mile run around Monroe County to benefit AutismUp. Finally, he presented 10 Empire Awards to local businesses including Flower City Down Syndrome Network, Crust Pie Co and Rochester Construction Training Center.

The full list of awardees with brief descriptions is below.

NYS Senator Jeremy Cooney

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This was the second year we've done this event at beautiful Kilbourn Hall and we had an impressive crowd - business owners, pillars of our community, dedicated civil servants, and more - I am proud to be honoring them. The Rochester community is full of individuals and organizations quietly doing the work to make our City great and I appreciate every opportunity I get to recognize that."

COMMENDATIONS

The New York State Commendation acknowledges exceptional individuals who have made a lasting contribution to their community.

- Ann Costello - Retired Executive Director For The Golisano Foundation.
- Viola Curry - A Resident Of The Southwest For Over 60 Years, She's Worked With Her Neighbors As Part Of The Montgomery Neighborhood Center's Team For Over 40 Years.
- Dr. Janice Harbin - Dr. Harbin Will Be Retiring From Her Role As Jordan Health Center's Ceo In Just Over A Month. Accepting Her Commendation On Her Behalf Was Chief Operating Officer For Jordan Health, Charles Green.
- Judge Karen Morris - Has Been Brighton Town Justice Since 1994 - A Near 30 Year Tenure.
- Makhan Singh - founder and retired owner of Thali of India, located in Brighton, NY.

EMPIRE AWARDS

The New York State Senate Empire Award recognizes excellence in business throughout the state.

- Avvino - woman owned business and cornerstone of the Brighton community.
- Bread Dough, Hot & Fresh - An Afghan bakery, owned by Mustafa Dawran, located in Henrietta, NY.
- Crust Pie Co. - Rochester's premier AAPI-owned bakery.
- Flower City Down Syndrome Network - Flower City Down Syndrome Network has a mission to provide education, support, and opportunities to people with Down syndrome and their families.
- Golden Harvest Bakery & Cafe - a family-owned, ASL-friendly bakery in Henrietta.
- Holiday Inn Downtown - This past September, the Holiday Inn Downtown was the home to dozens of families seeking asylum.
- Need Salon & Spa - Located in the City of Rochester, is known for going the extra mile and finding ways to use their skills to give back.
- Ralph Honda - leader in automotive care on the westside, led by Steve Ralph, an advocate for local jobs through the automotive dealers association.
- Rochester Construction Training Center - is a not for profit making a connection between the need for skilled construction workers and communities not typically recruited and trained for this work.
- Soulistic Sweets - a black-owned, vegan bakery who describe it best on their website, they, "put lots of love and careful attention in each item."

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