



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of February 12, 2024 -- 'Nomination processes underway to honor local citizens'

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 12, 2024

| ISSUE: **VETERANS HALL OF FAME; WOMEN OF DISTINCTION**



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This week, **"Nomination processes underway to honor local citizens"**

There are two nomination processes underway across the Senate district I represent that I'd like to bring to your attention. And I'd like to encourage your participation in them.

As a reminder, the 58th Senate District encompasses Chemung, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, and Yates counties, and part of Allegany County (the towns of Alfred, Almond, Amity, Andover, Birdsall, Burns, Grove, Independence, Scio, Ward, Wellsville, and Willing).

The first process will help select our region's 2024 inductee into the New York State Senate "Veterans Hall of Fame."

The Veterans Hall of Fame is an online tribute to the military service and civilian lives of distinguished veterans from here at home and throughout New York State. It was established in 2005 and honors veterans whose service in the United States Armed Forces has been accompanied by service to the community and accomplishments as a civilian.

I've been grateful to induct numerous local veterans including, among others: Anthony J. "Tony" Specchio, Sr., a distinguished Korean War veteran and widely respected for his long-standing and active service to veterans and government in Watkins Glen and throughout Schuyler County; Warren A. Thompson, a World War II United States Army veteran, lifelong Steuben County resident and farmer, and stalwart in the county's civic and veterans affairs; Paul C. "Digger" Vendetti of Elmira, a World War II United States Navy veteran and longtime caretaker at Woodlawn National Cemetery; Dennis L. "Denny" Wolfe, Sr. of Chemung County, a well-known area Vietnam War veteran and founder of the Vietnam War Museum in Elmira; and, last year, Andrew Swarthout of Yates County, a highly decorated Vietnam War veteran and mainstay of local veterans' organizations.

Nominations for the Veterans Hall of Fame will be accepted until Friday, March 1st. Nomination letters should include a short biography highlighting the nominee's military service, and civilian service awards and achievements, and be e-mailed to me at omara@nysenate.gov.

The second ongoing nomination process is to help choose this region's representative for the Senate's 2024 "Women of Distinction" tribute. The "Women of Distinction" program, now in its 26th year, offers the opportunity to honor local women making outstanding contributions to area communities. My Senate colleagues and I annually select a "Woman of Distinction" honoree from our respective legislative districts.

It's a meaningful recognition. We all know someone who makes an enormous difference to the community at large. Whether she is a service provider, a law enforcement officer going above and beyond the call of duty, a teacher, a nurse, a business leader, or simply a community resident known for her good deeds, I'd like to see her recognized.

My past "Women of Distinction" honorees have included, among others: Carol Berry of Hornell, a regional library professional and director of the Dormann Library in Bath; Beverly "Bev" Stamp, co-owner and operator of Lakewood Vineyards in Watkins Glen, a beloved ambassador of New York State's nationally and internationally renowned wine and grape industry; Lauren R. Snyder, a public health professional from Penn Yan who served as the Yates County Public Health Director; Dawn R. Smith, Transition and Care Management (TCM) Program Manager at the Bath VA Medical Center and local veterans advocate; Carmella Hoffmann, owner and operator of Sunset View Creamery in Odessa (Schuyler County); Kathryn J. Boor, a native of Chemung County and the former Ronald P. Lynch Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at Cornell University; Pauline "Polly" Holbrook, a longtime stalwart of civic affairs in the city of Hornell and the Canisteo Valley; Natasha Thompson, former President and Chief Executive Officer of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier; and, last year, Nancy Kirby, a longstanding advocate and leader for small businesses and entrepreneurship throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions.

The deadline for submitting a nomination for this year's Women of Distinction recognition is Friday, February 23rd. Nominations can be submitted online [HERE](#).

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