



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lea Webb

## Senator Lea Webb Honors the Sciencenter with the New York State Senate Empire Award

LEA WEBB August 6, 2024

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**Ithaca, NY** – Today, Senator Lea Webb presented the New York State Senate's Empire Award to the Sciencenter, the highest honor bestowed by the State Senate on businesses and organizations that have made significant contributions to their communities.

The Sciencenter, a nationally recognized museum, welcomes over 100,000 guests in Ithaca and reaches over 1.5 million guests worldwide through its traveling exhibitions and outreach

programs each year. At the Sciencenter, visitors enjoy hands-on experiences related to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). The exhibits and programs are designed to build science process skills and provide interactive experiences exploring topics such as the forces and energy, moving air and water, astronomy, and ocean health. Visitors can also engage with live animals like reptiles and fish, enhancing their understanding of the natural world. Most exhibits are crafted in the Sciencenter's fabrication shop by its team of dedicated exhibit developers.

The Sciencenter's commitment to education and community engagement exemplifies the spirit of the New York State Senate Empire Award. Senator Webb's recognition underscores the museum's role in inspiring the next generation of scientists, engineers, and innovators, ensuring a brighter future for all.

"As a proud supporter and advocate for STEM education, I am delighted to present the Sciencenter with the New York State Senate Empire Award," **said Senator Lea Webb**. "This museum has been a cornerstone of the Southern Tier community, enriching lives, igniting curiosity, and fostering a lifelong love of learning for decades. The Sciencenter's contributions to our region are invaluable, and I look forward to seeing its continued impact for generations to come."

"We are incredibly honored to receive the prestigious New York State Empire Award from Senator Webb," **said Michelle Kortenaar, Executive Director of the Sciencenter**. "This recognition reflects the hard work and dedication of our staff, volunteers, and supporters who are passionate about making science accessible to everyone in our community. It reinforces our commitment to inspire a love for science and learning in people of all ages."

## **HISTORY:**

Founded in May 1983 as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit educational organization, the Sciencenter emerged from a hands-on science program run for 15 years by volunteer teachers Debbie Levin and Ilma Levine at several Ithaca City School District elementary schools. Recognizing the importance of making science accessible to underserved youth from an early age, Debbie and Ilma's initiative evolved into a larger and more permanent facility. Construction of the initial 5,000 square foot museum and adjacent outdoor science park began in August 1992 and concluded in May 1993. In 1999, the Sciencenter raised \$5.6 million to renovate and expand the facility to 32,000 square feet with the support of more than 1,200 volunteers.

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**[Watch the Full Announcement \(LINK\)](#) | [Photos from the Announcement \(LINK\)](#)**