



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeremy Cooney

Senator Cooney Hosts Year End Community Awards Ceremony

JEREMY COONEY January 9, 2025



Ceremony Honored Individuals And Businesses Who Have Made Key Impact In The Rochester Community, Including Senator Cooney's 2024 Veterans Hall Of Fame Inductee

(ROCHESTER, NY) - Today **Senator Jeremy Cooney (D-Rochester)** hosted his annual Year-End Community Awards Ceremony honoring local leaders and businesses who have made contributions to Greater Rochester. This included New York State Commendations for individuals who have made a lasting impact in Rochester, Empire Awards to recognize excellence in business, and Senator Cooney's nomination to the New York State Historic

Business Preservation Registry.

“This ceremony is an opportunity to give back to those who make our Rochester community so special,” said **Senator Cooney**. “From neighbors who put their lives on the line to serve our country to small business owners who give back to our community, I was proud to recognize changemakers in Rochester and honor their important contributions to enhancing our collective quality of life.”

Also included as an honoree was Colonel Nancy Bird, Senator Cooney’s inductee this year for the New York State Veterans Hall of Fame. Col. Bird served in the U.S. Army for 40 years from 1961 to 2001, a trailblazer who held several positions including Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, Instructor, Administrator, Service Coordinator and Recruiter. She is a pioneer for women in the Armed Services, playing a role in preparing the Army to accept females into their ROTC program. After her retirement, Col. Bird maintained her commitment to our nation and serving the community. Col. Bird volunteers every other Friday night at the Blue Star Mother's Coffee House to support her fellow female veterans. She once said that, “In my era, there was little to no recognition or even a question about military service as a woman,” a reality that she spent her career working to change.

“Colonel Nancy Bird is a national hero and a pioneer for women in the armed services. We can never truly thank her enough for the sacrifices she made for our country, but her induction into the Veterans Hall of Fame is a way to give her the recognition she so thoroughly deserves. I was proud to nominate her for this honor and we are very fortunate to have her leadership here in Rochester,” **Senator Cooney continued**.

A full list of awardees can be found below:

NYS Historic Business Preservation Registry

- **Flower City Communications** - Founded in 1965 in Rochester, Flower City Communications provides communications equipment to first responders, schools, and companies across our region. This includes two-way radios, cameras, license plate reading equipment, and products for weapons detection. They have been based at their current location on Lyell Avenue for over 30 years.

NYS Senate Proclamations

- **Daryl Dear Cubitt** - Earlier this year Daryl completed her goal of walking every street in Monroe County, an adventure that began in 2019. She explored all 9,220 roads over the past several years, mostly solo, travelling 38 million feet before completing her mission.
- **Jonathan Hardin** - Jonathan has dedicated his career to giving back to the community. Jonathan has served as President of the Charlotte Community Association, and founded Many Neighbors Building Neighborhoods, a collaboration of 30 neighborhood groups. He now serves as acting Executive Director of Cameron Community, serving the Lyell-Otis neighborhood in the City of Rochester where he works to combat poverty.

NYS Commendations

- **Jacqueline Farrell** - Jaqueline is the market manager of the Westside Farmers Market on Genesee Street, an organization that works to make fresh fruits and vegetables more accessible in Southwest Rochester.

- **Clianda Florence** - Founder & CEO of Let's Get LIT, a nonprofit that works to bolster literacy skills for inner city youth and instill a love for reading and learning at an early age. She is the granddaughter of Minister Franklin Florence, Sr.
- **Kathy Graupman** - Superintendent of Greece Central School District who is retiring at the end of the year. Kathy previously served as the President of the Monroe County Council of School Superintendents, leading local schools during the pandemic.
- **Bijaya Khadka** - A refugee who came to the US from Nepal at the age of 17, Bijaya is the founder of House of Refuge USA, an organization that provides services to new Americans such as preparing them for college, helping them find jobs, and assisting them in starting businesses of their own.
- **Sanford Mayer** - A local pediatrician with over 50 years of experience, Dr. Mayer now mentors medical students at Golisano Children's hospital in retirement. He recently served as the chairman of the Greater Rochester Health Foundation.
- **Suzanne Mayer** - Suzanne has led organizational change initiatives in the banking, professional, and manufacturing industries for more than 30 years. She now serves as President of Hinge Neighbors, a nonprofit community group with a commitment towards protecting neighborhood diversity and culture, planning, and individual investment.

- **Jushawn Rucker** - A School Safety Officer at Wilson Foundation Academy who saved a 15-year old's life during a basketball game when he administered CPR and an AED after the student went into cardiac arrest on the court.

NYS Empire Awards

- **Arbor Venues** - A full service event company with three venues in the City of Rochester, Arbor Loft, Arbor Midtown, and Arbor at the Port. Arbor Venues specializes in weddings, birthdays, company events, and other large celebrations.
- **Labella** - Headquartered in Downtown Rochester, Labella has over 2,000 architects, engineers, planners, and construction managers working in over 30 offices worldwide.
- **Levantine's Syrian Cafe & Cuisine** - A family-owned halal cafe in Gates, Levantine's is celebrating their 5-year anniversary after opening during the pandemic.
- **Lu Engineers** - A Minority-owned Business Enterprise, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise, and Veteran Owned Business, Lu Engineers is a civil and environmental engineering firm located in WNY.

- **MJ Dispensary** - The first legal dispensary in Monroe County (in Henrietta), MJ Dispensary is celebrating their one year anniversary this December. They have donated a portion of their sales to local education.
- **Rochester Pedal Tours** - Starting in 2015 with one driver, Rochester Pedal Tours now has 10 trained drivers that offer an exciting new way to experience Rochester for events and celebrations.
- **Spice Bazaar** - A one-stop shopping destination for Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, and Nepali grocery items and gifts. The owner, Chander, prides himself on providing quality products, a bright welcoming environment, and building community with his shoppers.
- **Travel Ease** - The only AAPI-owned travel agency in the Rochester area, Travel Ease has a combined 110 years of experience in the travel industry. They are located in Brighton.

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