



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lea Webb

## Senator Webb Honors Local Women at Her Third Annual Women's History Month Award Reception

LEA WEBB | March 21, 2025

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**(Binghamton, NY)** – Today, Senator Lea Webb hosted her third annual Women's History Month Award Reception at the State Office Building in Binghamton, celebrating 11 outstanding women from across Senate District 52 who have made a profound impact on their communities. These honorees, including small business owners, educators, public servants, community advocates, a nonprofit leader, and a poet laureate, have each made a lasting impact on their communities. Their dedication to service, innovation, and the arts

reflects the strength and resilience of women who continue to shape our society for the better.

Awards and recognitions were presented to:

- **Sharon Ball**, *New York State Senate Commendation Award Recipient*
- **Janie E. Bibbie**, *New York State Senate Commendation Award Recipient*
- **Jennifer Lesko**, *New York State Senate Commendation Award Recipient*
- **Lori Megivern**, *New York State Senate Commendation Award Recipient*
- **Leanora Mims**, *New York State Senate Commendation Award Recipient*
- **Tanya Williams**, *New York State Senate Empire Award for Business Excellence*
- **Kuukua Yomekpe**, *New York State Senate Empire Award for Business Excellence*
- **Dr. Denise Yull**, *New York State Senate Proclamation*
- **Jordyn Durham**, *New York State Senate Certificate of Merit*
- **Taylor Durham**, *New York State Senate Certificate of Merit*
- **Lillian Williams**, *New York State Senate Certificate of Merit*

**Senator Webb stated**, “Women's History Month is a time to reflect on the extraordinary contributions women have made throughout history and continue to make today. It is a reminder that women's voices, leadership, and resilience have always been at the heart of progress. This year, I am proud to recognize incredible local leaders—entrepreneurs, activists, and change-makers—who are making a real difference in our communities. By uplifting their achievements, we not only celebrate their impact but also reaffirm our commitment to breaking barriers and building a more just and equitable future. When women rise, communities thrive, and I am honored to shine a light on the trailblazers shaping a better

tomorrow.”

*Quotes in alphabetical order:*

**Said Sharon Ball**, “I feel surprised and humbled by Senator Webb’s recognition. I find it hard to believe I’m worthy of this honor. I have learned from so many community warriors since I moved to Broome County in 2003. They helped show me the way when I served as executive director of the Broome County Arts Council; when I ran for State Senate in 2016, lost the race, but broadened perspectives; and now, as I serve on boards and use my voice and involvement to support the literary arts and other creative projects. I’m proud to share this award with all who value culture and community for everyone in the Southern Tier.”

**Said Janie E. Bibbie**, “It was my privilege to serve as Tompkins County Poet Laureate for 2023 and 2024, in addition to serving in various other volunteer roles in Ithaca. One of the most rewarding aspects of being a poet laureate was inspiring people to try writing poetry and helping them find the courage to share their words. I am grateful and honored to receive this award from Senator Webb.”

“Thank you, Senator Webb, for this honor and for the important work you do in uplifting women and recognizing service,” **said Jennifer Lesko**. “Working in the nonprofit sector since graduating college in 1993, has taught me that true change happens when communities come together, when voices—especially those that have been overlooked—are strengthened, and when we lead with understanding and purpose. To be able to work in the community where I grew up and love, to create opportunities for those who need our care, or simply standing up for what’s right, I believe that each of us has the power to make a difference and I am honored to be able to help make that difference here in Broome County.”

**Said Lori Megivern**, “Breathing the air in this room, standing with these accomplished women is invigorating, astounding, and enlightening. Thank you, Senator Lea Webb, for this

recognition and for including me in this recharging event. I am honored, humbled, and excited to continue to move forward in my community. I am proud to currently be serving on our School Board of Education, the Cortland Repertory Theatre Board of Directors, the Homeville Museum Hall of Fame Selection Committee, and the Cornell University Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners. 2025 will mark my 76th year proudly living in and contributing to the Southern Tier. Thank you again Senator Lea Webb and to my Nominators.”

“I am deeply honored to receive the New York State Senate Commendation Award from Senator Webb,” **said Leanora Mims.** “As the saying goes, 'If we stand tall, we stand on the shoulders of our Ancestors.' My Ancestors paved the way for me to see the invisible so that I could achieve the impossible. This recognition is not just mine—it belongs to those who came before me and those who will come after. I admire Senator Webb immensely. Her record speaks for itself, showing her unwavering commitment to community, families, and women. It is truly a privilege to be recognized by someone who leads with such purpose and passion. Still I Rise! What is in front of you is much more important than what you have left behind.”

“I am deeply honored to receive this recognition from Senator Webb,” **said Tanya Williams.** “I have been proud to serve in the Southern Tier for 32 years, and it is a privilege to support the growth and development of our community. The most rewarding aspect of my work is being about to connect and give back to my community. I am humbled by this award and thankful for the opportunity to give back to the community I love.”

“I am extremely honored to be receiving this recognition from Senator Lea Webb,” **said Kuukua Yomekpe, Owner of Asempe Kitchen.** “I have been in the community for 7 years now, first working in Higher Education in two local colleges, and all the while pursuing my love of cooking by creating community dinners and conversations on those campuses. I have

enjoyed every bit of the progression of my business from the booth at the Natural Hair festival, to the booth at the Vegan festival, my long standing booth at the Ithaca Farmers Market, and now into this brick and mortar location. We have held one community dinner in our space so far but are planning to host more. I feel rewarded by people's yummy smiles and their consistent return for more of our food. I am grateful that the Southern Tier community welcomed and embraced us immediately. I am humbled by this award and thankful for the opportunity to give back to the community I have grown to appreciate.”

“On behalf of the **CARES family**, I want to express our deep gratitude for this recognition and for Senator Webb’s unwavering support,” said Dr. Denise Yull. “We look forward to expanding our programs, strengthening our impact, and continuing working to ensure that **every child in Binghamton has the opportunity to thrive.**”

“I opened simple luxuries to find out how a business is run,” said **Jordyn Durham, Co-Owner of Simple Luxuries**. “But now it is more than that. And that is why I am so honored to be receiving this award. Simple luxuries taught me to follow my dreams and reach my goals so I hope it does the same for others especially people my age”

“As a young entrepreneur striving for greatness is what I do best,” said **Taylor Durham, Co-Owner of Simple Luxuries**. “You don’t become great by laying down and thinking about what you’re gonna do. Your thoughts and dreams become reality when you believe and put in the work”

“I am truly honored to receive this award from Senator Webb,” said Lillian Williams, **Owner of Lilly’s Luxuries**. “As a young entrepreneur from Binghamton, New York, it has been a privilege to serve the Southern Tier for the past five years. Being able to contribute to my community with my handmade products whether it’s a calming candle, a beautifully scented soap, or a thoughtful gift brings me so much joy. Looking back on my journey, I am so proud

of how far I've come and how much my talent has grown. This award means so much to me, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to give back to the community that has supported me along the way. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for this honor and for believing in my work.”

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