



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Kenneth P. LaValle

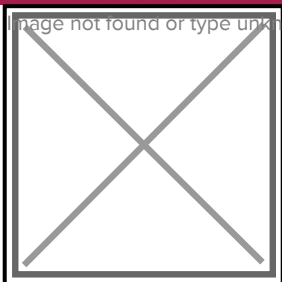
Senator LaValle Names Southampton's Nicole Behrens a Woman of Distinction From First Senatorial District, Statewide Capitol Fete May 24.

KENNETH P. LAVALLE May 2, 2011

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Women of
DISTINCTION



“Nicole Behrens, survived 10 years of violence against her by her own husband, in her own home and – with tremendous courage – *rose above* that experience and lifted her daughter with her to not only escape the life of violence and devastation, but to then give back tremendously and consistently to the community.”

– *excerpt from nominating letter to NY State Senator Kenneth P. LaValle*

Southampton's Nicole Behrens has been selected by New York State Senator Kenneth P. LaValle as the First Senatorial District's *Woman of Distinction*.

"I am proud," Senator LaValle said, "to honor Nicole Behrens as this year's *Woman of Distinction*. Her name will join that of other women whose accomplishments, sacrifices and good deeds are deserving of special recognition." Nicole will receive the award at a May 24 reception in Albany with women from across New York State.

About *Woman of Distinction* Nicole Behrens

Nicole Behrens is a mother, wife, Assistant Vice President at Merrill Lynch, avid motorcyclist and kayaker, resident of Long Island's East End – and a domestic violence survivor.

It is this last characteristic, being a victim and survivor of recurring violence in her house, that does not define Nicole, but that has *propelled* Nicole to give back to the community with passion and inspiration in a series of unique ways.

For years, Nicole has generously volunteered her time regularly with The Retreat, eastern Long Island's only domestic violence shelter and comprehensive domestic violence services agency, as a *Board Member*—helping to boost fundraising strategies and activities, as the *Treasurer*—making sure that The Retreat is fiscally sound and can continue serving the community; and as a gifted *speaker* and *writer* who has inspired other women to lift themselves and their children from the grips of domestic violence. She has shared her difficult story with others... to *inspire* life-changing action.

"She escaped the violence and went on to help the community in ways that honored and leveraged her personal journey, her story, her professional financial skills, and her passion for helping others. It is a privilege to bestow this honor on Nicole," LaValle said, "and I am

proud to be her Senator,” LaValle said.

“Nicole has become the voice for other domestic violence victims unable to speak up for themselves. She takes steps big and small every day to help other women move themselves toward *freedom* and *safety*,” said Friedman.

LaValle noted that the Senate’s “Women of Distinction” program was created in 1998 to honor New York women who exemplify personal excellence or whose professional achievements or acts of courage, selflessness, integrity or perseverance serve as an example to all New Yorkers. Women from the worlds of business, academics, and civic life, as well as those who have performed heroic or selfless acts, made significant discoveries, or provided examples of personal excellence against difficult odds have been honored at the annual event.