



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Stephen M. Saland

## Senator Saland Presented WITH 2012 "Katie's Hero" Award

STEPHEN M. SALAND August 14, 2012

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*Parents of murder victim Katie Sepich, along with Elizabeth Smart, recognize Senator Stephen Saland for his work on SB6733 to require DNA upon conviction of all misdemeanors*

CHICAGO, Illinois. (August 8, 2012) - The parents of murder victim Katie Sepich were joined by abduction survivor Elizabeth Smart in presenting New York State Senator Stephen Saland with the "Katie's Hero Award". The Katie's Hero Award is an honor bestowed by the Sepich's non-profit advocacy group DNA Saves on individuals for leadership in solving and preventing crime by supporting legislation to expand the use of forensic DNA technology.

According to the certificate of award, Senator Saland was selected for his strong support of SB6733 in 2012 to require DNA upon conviction of all misdemeanors in New York, to ensure law enforcement is not unwittingly releasing repeat offenders back into the community.

Jayann Sepich, co-founder and president of DNA Saves, introduced the award and 2012 recipients at a Forensic DNA Luncheon event held concurrently during the annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislators (held this year in Chicago).

In presenting the award, Ms. Sepich said, "The enactment of SB6733 will have a profound and lasting impact on public safety in New York. Senator Saland's leadership on this issue will result in getting many rapists and other violent criminals off the streets, and will prevent additional New York residents from being needlessly victimized."

The keynote speaker at the luncheon was Elizabeth Smart, who was kidnapped at knife point from her own bedroom at the age of 14. For nine months she was the captive of Brian David Mitchell until she was finally rescued. In 2010, Mitchell was convicted of Smart's abduction and was sentenced to life in prison. Ms. Smart addressed the crowd of 100 legislators and their guests, representing twenty-six states. She stated, "Arrestee DNA legislation is needed in every state to make our communities safer places to live."

DNA Saves is a non-profit association organized to educate policy makers and the public about the value of forensic DNA. The association was formed by Jayann and David Sepich in late 2008, marking the five year anniversary of the senseless murder of their daughter, Katie. DNA Saves is committed to working with every state to pass laws allowing DNA to be taken upon arrest, and to provide meaningful funding for DNA programs.

Had a DNA sample been taken from Katie's murderer, Gabriel Avilla, upon arrest for an unrelated crime, the Sepichs would have discovered who killed their daughter only three months after her death. Instead, Avilla remained free to victimize more unsuspecting

daughters, while the Sepichs waited for answers. The Sepichs hope that by advocating for better DNA testing laws they can prevent another mother and father from asking "why?"