



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Cold Weather, Warm Hearts

PATTY RITCHIE February 10, 2014

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Here in Upstate New York, we know what it means to be part of a “close knit” community. It means collaborating to better our region. It means sharing in experiences that bring us closer together. And above all else, it means working alongside one another to help those in need.

When a fierce lake effect snowstorm hit Jefferson County last month, we saw shining examples of what it means to be “close knit.” We saw people opening their homes to stranded strangers. We saw emergency

volunteers setting up shelters. We saw local businesses donating food to make sure no one went hungry and we saw countless other examples of extreme generosity.

When it was all said and done, this major lake effect snowstorm dumped more than three feet of snow on parts of Jefferson County. The Adams area was hit particularly hard by the storm, which closed Route 81 and caused more than 150 motorists to take refuge in the community.

In the days to follow the storm, we saw reports on the television and in the paper of those who lent a hand. There were stories of families inviting Canadian travelers into their homes for the night, local businesses donating food to shelters and emergency responders who helped motorists get out of tough situations.

At my recent “People Helping People: A Celebration of Adams, NY,” I had the opportunity to thank more than 50 “snow angels” who opened both their hearts and their homes during the storm. Not only did the celebration give me a chance to honor our volunteers, I was also able to meet with local and state officials regarding storm response; discussing what works well, and what can be improved upon to make the next winter storm easier to manage. Out of the discussion came a lot of great ideas that I’ll be taking back to Albany to help make things easier—and safer—for our emergency officials, highway crews and others who respond to weather events. You can read more about the event [here](#).

Here in the North Country, we know about tough winters, but as the people of Adams showed us, sometimes the worst can bring out the best. But it’s not just in Adams—it’s something we see all across the Central and Northern New York region. Whether it’s helping a neighbor dig out from a storm, or checking in on the elderly when a cold spell hits, it’s the little things we do each and every day that make our region such a special place to live.