



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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“Not an Anchor but a Mast”

My calendar is jam-packed. There are countless hours wading through paperwork and policy and long days turned to night spent in legislative session at the State House in Albany. When I'm home here on the Island, I'm tending to dozens of constituent problems and a typical day includes at least six or seven functions or meetings in our various communities. Weekends hold even more (no exaggeration) but the community work is what I love most – minus all the driving.

Now take into account that my brothers and sisters are just as busy. There are five of us siblings, with two sets of twins and as hectic as we are with our wives, husbands, children, and jobs, our entire family still manages to regroup at my mother's house on a weekly basis to break bread and spend time with the extended family. For us it provides a much-needed respite and it reminds us that family is what's most important. Naturally, the home-cooking and camaraderie are key but truth be told, even the ear-splitting commotion the 19 of us make (22 with our dogs) is somehow comforting. At the center of this whirlwind you will find my mom, who quietly brings this eclectic brood together in order to keep us moving forward. To borrow a sentiment from the poet Khalil Gibran, our house is “not an anchor but a mast” and my mom continuously hoists it for us. That's why no matter how crazy my schedule or stressful the situation, simply hearing her voice defuses a lot of pressure for me. Her love is

unconditional and that somehow right-sizes everything else.

That's probably also why I believe so many of our societal ills could be helped by pursuing one simple strategy: to hold up and support the role of motherhood. I'm not alone in thinking so. One need only search the word online and thousands upon thousands of pages of research studies, papers – and just plain old common sense, make it clear: mothers play a pivotal role in societal development.

For most, the first real unit we belong to is family. It's where we learn to interact, to grow and most importantly, it's where we develop a sense of belonging and accountability to someone other than our selves. It's a microcosm of a larger community, and since time immemorial, mothers have been the primary shapers of that experience. Unfortunately, I think we've seen those qualities go haywire more and more as the role of family becomes diminished in our increasingly fast-paced world.

To be sure, we should celebrate the personal love we have for our moms and the unconditional love they have for us on Mother's Day. But maybe we can honor them another way. Maybe we can use the day to recognize how vital mothers are to our society and commit ourselves to building them up, whomever and wherever they may be. Author Ellen Key expressed it best when she wrote,

The mother is the most precious possession of the nation, so precious that society advances its highest well-being when it protects the functions of the mother.

I couldn't agree more. And while it may sound simplistic to all the policy wonks, I can think of no surer way to better our world than to make sure moms have the love and support they need to raise good families. Happy Mother's day to my mom, my wife, and to all the wonderful moms reading this column. Your gifts are immeasurable.