



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Marissa Bernowitz

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR. May 13, 2014



Women of
DISTINCTION
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

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Award: HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Year: 2014

Marissa Bernowitz has quickly and successfully become a disaster relief volunteer coordinator at 27 years of age. In just under two years she has served her community and many others around the Rockaways...and she is still going strong.

The Superstorm Sandy anniversary date of October 29, 2012 means more than just a personal loss to Ms. Bernowitz. After losing her apartment and then her job due to the storm, Ms. Bernowitz found a way to make the best of a bad situation. She almost immediately started coordinating safety efforts for her neighbors, and then for the well-being of those who stayed behind. Not knowing how much longer they would be without power, without local businesses open or without everyday essentials, she started making calls and using social media to reach out to the “outside world” for assistance.

Ms. Bernowitz volunteered at a few local distribution sites throughout the Rockaways until January of 2013, when the last site was about to shut down. With community need still present and help starting to pull out, Ms. Bernowitz founded the Rockaway Free Flea Market. Throughout the week, Ms. Bernowitz and her team of volunteers rented trucks, transported supplies and stored them accordingly. Once a week, they would pop up tables and tents in a flea market style – except that everything at this market was FREE. The project faced a few hurdles and even had to close down at one point due to lack of funding, storage and donations.

That did not stop Ms. Bernowitz. She continued to stay involved in the community and advocate for those recovering and rebuilding. She became involved in helping with FEMA paperwork, signing people up for community services, and serving voluntarily as the Head Elf Of Queens for the Secret Sandy Claus Project (which delivered toys and essentials to roughly 1,500 children across all Sandy-affected areas). She currently holds a volunteer

position as the Director at the non-for-profit Queens Division of We Care NY. Ms. Bernowitz is in charge of their relief effort in Queens, which includes, but is not limited to: transporting supplies, maintaining a hotline for both donors and families in need, attending and participating in community recovery groups and planning and hosting community events to bring services to the people. She also continues her FREE Flea Market once a month.

In the midst of all of this, Ms. Bernowitz and her two sons are still displaced. She has managed to find part-time employment, but dedicates most of her time and energy to helping others, no matter what time or day they might reach out for aid. She has shown an extreme devotion to those around her and her Queens community.