



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tom Libous

Bettye Canestaro

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Women of
DISTINCTION
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

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Award: HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Year: 2014

Bettye Canestaro is the Hospice Volunteer Coordinator at Lourdes Hospital in Binghamton, and has dedicated more than twenty years to providing Hospice care. She truly exemplifies the expression, “find your passion and you’ll never work a day in your life.”

Ms. Canestaro’s family refers to her as a professional volunteer – and for good reason. She was first inspired to help when a personal family situation took Ms. Canestaro to Lourdes Hospital’s Oncology Department. She immediately enjoyed the connection between patients and the staff. Ms. Canestaro was in awe of the resilience and zest for life the chemotherapy patients had, amid their difficult journey. During this time, she heard about Hospice and made an appointment with the volunteer coordinator to learn more.

As she began to donate her time and visit with patients, her passion grew. Ms. Canestaro worked with inhome patients who made her feel like she was part of their family. She traveled with them through their ups and downs along their final journeys. Ms. Canestaro also made bereavement calls to the families of those patients that had passed, working with them for a 13-month period.

As Hospice expanded into nursing homes, she seized the opportunity to bring her passion to a new group of people. She spent valuable time with the patients, keeping them company and watching reruns of Gunsmoke and The Rifleman together.

Seven years ago, she was recognized for her deep passion and longtime dedication to Hospice, when she earned the full-time position of Hospice Volunteer Coordinator at Lourdes. As Coordinator, Bettye works with 110 “fabulous” volunteers who provide patient and family support, as well bereavement support. Ms. Canestaro oversees all the volunteer activities for the Hospice team, and ensures patients and families are given the help they

need.

Ms. Canestaro also serves as the chairperson of the Service Excellence Committee and the Sunshine Fund at Lourdes. She participates in the many community activities sponsored by Lourdes, such as fundraising walks and soup kitchens.

In her spare time, she enjoys visiting her three sons and five grandchildren. She started tap dancing lessons five years ago, and has enjoyed taking part in community theater groups for the past fifteen years.