



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Linda A. Thomas

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 13, 2015



Women of
DISTINCTION
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

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Award: HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Year: 2015

A successful small business is often the backbone and the heart and soul of a small community. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the village of Wellsburg, New York, where Linda Thomas has owned and operated the Wellsburg Diner since 1997.

In September 2011, Tropical Storm Lee swept across New York's Southern Tier and its many small towns, causing once-in-a-lifetime flooding. The storm devastated Wellsburg, and the Wellsburg Diner was completely destroyed.

Ms. Thomas, faced with daunting financial and personal hardships, vowed to reopen her place of business, saying, "This town's been very good to me, I wanted to stay with them...The Wellsburg Diner is more than a building. It's a family."

Local citizens and community leaders rallied around Ms. Thomas, and in early 2012, the Wellsburg Diner reopened just a block away from its original site. It is now in a larger, more accommodating space, and has become a center of community life – a place to have a great meal, find a friendly face and share laughs. People also gather in support of community benefits at the Diner, working together on such challenges and concerns as "A Voice for Animals" and "The Second Chance Ranch."

Over the past several years, the Wellsburg Diner, under Ms. Thomas' steadfast guidance, has beaten the odds and continued to expand. Ms. Thomas now provides good jobs for nearly 20 local workers in a small community with a shattered local economy.

In 2013, Ms. Thomas and the Diner were honored by the Elmira Star-Gazette with a "Best of the Twin Tiers Award." In addition, the Wellsburg Diner has recently been selected for a prestigious "Small Business Excellence Award" from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Ms. Thomas has spent a lifetime working in the local restaurant and hospitality industry. At the Wellsburg Diner for nearly two decades, she has built much more than a successful, thriving small business – she has opened the doors to community hope, pride and spirit.