



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Sister Mary Doris

JOSE M. SERRANO May 11, 2016

| ISSUE: **2016 WOMEN OF DISTINCTION**



*Women of*  
**DISTINCTION**  
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

*Sister Mary Doris*

Sister Mary Doris was born in Scotland and grew up in the Bronx, where she completed her elementary and high school education. Shortly after, she received her Bachelor of Science in Education from Dominican College, and a Master of Science in Mathematics from Manhattan College, along with a Master in Pastoral Ministry from St. Joseph's College in Connecticut. Her dedication to higher education is to be admired.

Having entered the Convent of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York, at age 18, Sister Mary taught elementary and secondary education for 18 years before coming to the

Highbridge area of the Bronx. There, she took initiative and founded an Adult Education program in collaboration with Highbridge Community Life Center.

During her nine years of teaching GED, Sister Mary learned of the struggle of young pregnant and parenting women in her classes, many of whom were living in unsafe situations. Sister Mary and a group of her Dominican Sisters began work on acquiring a building that would serve as a shelter for homeless women and children. With the help of her Dominican Sisters – in particular Sister Margaret McDermott, Executive Director of Tolentine Zeiser Community Life Center – Siena House Shelter for 27 women and their children was born.

Funded by the New York City Department of Homeless Services, Siena House opened its doors on January 23, 1990. For the past 26 years, Siena House has assisted more than 2,000 women and children, providing temporary housing, social services, workshops in life skills, parenting, nutrition, child care and housing assistance, referrals to mental health services, educational and job training programs, and many other support services.

Without the courage, dedication, and caring initiative of Sister Mary Doris, these women and children would be living their lives in poverty and in fear. Thanks to her, they can feel safe when they close their eyes at night.