



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Area state legislators help honor local senior volunteers at State Capitol tribute to service

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 11, 2017

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Albany, N.Y., May 11—New York State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), Assemblyman Chris Friend (R,C,I-Big Flats) and Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning) helped welcome senior citizen volunteers from Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben counties to the

State Capitol on Tuesday, May 9, as part of the **2017 Older New Yorkers' Day celebration**.

The **New York State Office for the Aging** sponsored this week's event.

In a joint statement, O'Mara, Friend and Palmesano said, "What a great honor for all of the outstanding and meaningful service these area seniors have provided to so many of their fellow seniors and their communities throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions. It's a fitting tribute to the thousands of hours they've volunteered, which have made such a difference in so many lives."

According to the Office for the Aging, Older New Yorkers' Day is celebrated in conjunction with events across the nation during May to observe National Older American's Month. This week's event acknowledged the significant contributions made by older New Yorkers to their communities. Local county Offices for the Aging submitted nominations for the recognition.

The following area seniors were honored during this week's celebration:

> **J. Carol Lincoln (Chemung County):** Carol has volunteered in a number of organizations and agencies throughout the Southern Tier and statewide. Since retiring as the director of the Chemung County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) in 2005, Carol has donated more than 3,000 hours of her time serving others. Her service includes developing, planning and leading hunger outreach efforts; helping with home repairs, insurance counseling and fundraising; helping others stay healthy; and serving older adults, those with disabilities, and families with limited incomes. She was the task force chair for ATHENA from 2009 to 2014, and is currently president of the Bethany Village Board of Directors. Carol has volunteered for the Chemung County Department of Aging and Long Term Care as a health insurance counselor, and is an intake interviewer for the Arctic League, as well as an AARP health

information volunteer. She volunteers in the Free Community Kitchen and is a member of the Elmira Rotary Club. Additionally, she sits on the board for the United Way of the Southern Tier. Carol and her husband Ed have three children, 12 grandchildren and one great-grandchild;

> **Mike Wald (Chemung County):** Dr. Mike Wald served in the United States Army and is a retired pediatric physician. Mike has volunteered his time and talent in many areas. For the past 15 years, he has been a volunteer mediator with the Community Dispute Resolution Center. He has volunteered almost 500 hours and mediated 170 conflicts, transforming the lives of more than 340 individuals in his community. He has helped parents who are faced with decisions regarding how to parent while living apart. He has helped landlord and tenants come to mutual decisions regarding rent and housing issues. He continually offers disputing parties opportunities to transform their interactions with each other from destructive to constructive. He gives them a calm, quiet space to explore issues and the possibilities of resolution. Mike and his wife moved to Elmira in 1975. They have children and nine grandchildren. For 10 years they were foster parents and cared for 30 children in their home;

> **Robert Wirth (Schuyler County):** Robert "Bob" Wirth has made a difference in the health and well-being of many county residents through his participation in a variety of volunteer ventures. He has co-facilitated programs include Bone Builders and Strong for Life. As an advisory council member of the Retired Senior and Volunteer Program (RSVP), Wirth helps determine what programming may have a positive effect for those again in Schuyler County. Additionally, he puts his extensive knowledge about home repairs and building to work by serving with the Schuyler Housing Opportunity Council through construction projects. Bob also serves on the Schuyler Outreach Council and Schuyler County Hunger Task Force and volunteers with the summer food program as well as the Reynoldsville Food

Pantry. He has also been a regular blood donor. A resident of Schuyler County for 41 years, Bob resides with his wife, Wendy (see below), in Burdett, New York;

> **Wendy Wirth (Schuyler County):** Wendy Wirth has given countless hours toward the betterment of her community. Through her work with the Girl Scouts of America, she has been involved with young children and teens. She also has volunteered as a court-appointed special advocate. In addition to advocating for those in need, she provides classes on health and wellness, as well as hunger prevention through several food distribution programs, including RSVP, Schuyler County Office for the Aging, the Reynoldsville Food Pantry, Schuyler County Summer Food Program and the Schuyler County Hunger Task Force. Most recently she has been working with the Schuyler County Transit Link Line as a bus buddy, teaching older adults and others how to utilize the public bus system;

> **Linda Conway (Steuben County):** Linda Conway has a passion for serving our country's military, veterans, and their family members. A retired emergency services director for the American Red Cross Greater Steuben Chapter, Linda comes from a military family. Her father served in World War II, her grandfather in World War I, and she had a great-great uncle who served in the Civil War. Her ancestor Elihu Murray fought in both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. After retiring from the American Red Cross, Linda chose to continue volunteering for the Services to the Armed Forces program. She rebuilt the relationship with the Bath VA Medical Center and they have raised the profile of the program and its mission to support US active military, veterans and family members. Linda and her husband, Dale, reside in Pained Post;

> **Janet Schroeder (Steuben County):** Janet Schroeder has made an incredible difference in her community as the director of the Pantry of Angels. Her first step was to study the demographics of the community, which gave her a strong basis for pantry advocacy within the community. She overhauled the recruitment of the board of directors to separate

organizations from governance, and created a marketing campaign to increase community awareness of the Pantry's mission. Janet also networks and collaborates with hunger actions groups and other agencies to provide a forum for sharing, learning and working together. In 2011, the Pantry of Angels served an average of 30 households per week and in 2016, the average number of households served per week had grown to 67 – a testament to the hard work of Linda and all of her dedicated volunteers. Linda resides in Lindley, New York, on her family farm;

> **Leon Lawrence (Tompkins County):** Leon Lawrence, who died earlier this year on January 20, was a lifelong volunteer. His contributions were unmatched, both in number and in impact. He was a tireless volunteer for Cornell University, participating in and volunteering for programs such as the Urban Scholars Program, Community Support Team, recreation committee, the First-Year Family Weekend Planning Committee, Men's Alliance, Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Lecture Committee, Men of Color Council, and the Minority Organization of Architecture, Art and Planning, among others. He also served as the division deputy for the United Way Campaign 2004 for the College of Architecture, Art and Planning. He was married to his wife Diana for 50 years and together they raised four children and had two grandchildren.