



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Tedisco

## On the 20th Anniversary of Suzanne Lyall's Disappearance, Senator Tedisco Presents NYS Senate Liberty Medal to Mary Lyall, Suzanne's Mother; Holds NYS Missing Persons Day in Albany

SENATOR JAMES TEDISCO April 7, 2018

This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary since Ballston Spa resident Suzanne Lyall went missing from the University at Albany. Senator Jim Tedisco (R,C,I,REF-Glenville) today presented Suzanne Lyall's mother, Mary Lyall, of the Center for Hope, with the **New York State Senate Liberty Medal** – the Senate's highest honor – for everything she has done over the past 20 years to turn her own family's personal tragedy into something positive to help other families of missing persons in New York State and across the nation.

Senator Tedisco presented the Liberty Medal to Mary Lyall as part of the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Missing Persons Day Ceremony, sponsored by the Center for Hope, which was held at the NYS Museum and Cultural Education Center in Albany. The event, which Tedisco hosted and emceed, brings together family members of missing persons from across the state to share ways of coping and keeping hope alive, to prevent abductions and share information to find those who are missing. Missing Persons Day is organized by Mary Lyall, of the Center for Hope. This week marks Suzanne Lyall's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday and it's been 20 years since her disappearance.

“Mary Lyall is a community hero and a wonderful person, who with her late husband, Doug, turned their personal tragedy into a mission to ensure that what happened to their family is never experienced by someone else’s family. Mary Lyall’s crusade to help others and make New York State and our nation safer represents the best of our state and is truly worthy of the state Senate’s highest honor, the Liberty Medal,” said Senator Tedisco, who noted that Lyall is the first civilian that he has presented the award to since joining the Senate, as all of the 49<sup>th</sup> Senate District’s past recipients have been military veterans.

The Center for Hope, started by Mary Lyall and her late husband, Doug Lyall, has been a national leader in efforts to help find missing persons and advocating for legislation and innovative programs on the state and federal levels.

In 1999, Mary and Doug helped get “Suzanne’s Law Campus Safety Act” passed in New York to require all colleges in the state to have plans that provide for the investigation of missing students and violent felony offenses committed on campus.

Mary and Doug’s impassioned advocacy on behalf of their daughter and all families of missing persons got “Suzanne’s Law” passed on the federal level in 2003 to require that police notify the National Crime Information Center when someone between the ages of 18 and 21 is reported missing, as part of the national Amber Alert bill.

Last month, the state Senate passed Tedisco’s legislation, “*Suzanne’s Law -- the Assault-Free School Zone*” bill (**S.2881/A.6582**) to increase penalties for assaults and abductions on school grounds by one category higher, resulting in stricter penalties and longer prison sentences.

Tedisco noted that thanks to the strong advocacy of the Lyalls, New York became the first state in the nation to create a Missing Persons Remembrance Monument located next to the state museum in Albany and hold an annual Missing Persons Day that brings together

family members of missing persons to share ways of coping and to keep hope alive.

In recent years, the Lyalls conceived of the idea of putting the pictures of missing persons on playing cards distributed at state prisons and drink coasters at local restaurants and taverns with the hope this will generate tips that could solve a cold case. This led to the creation of the “Coasters for Hope” program that has distributed 75,000 drink coasters with pictures and information on missing persons to restaurants and taverns across the Capital Region.

Tedisco is currently working with Lyall and the Center for Hope to advocate for creation of a new unit in the NYS Police dedicated to investigating cold cases and missing persons cases.

This year’s keynote speaker for Missing Persons Day was Lisa Buske, whose sister, Heidi Allen, was kidnapped in 1994 from an Oswego convenience store and has never been found. The NYS Police and NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services also participated in the day and provided an opportunity for families to submit their DNA samples for comparison to unidentified individuals on the state DNA data base.

