



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kenneth P. LaValle

SENATOR LAVALLE HONORS RIVERHEAD RESIDENT DENISE CIVILETTI AS THE 2020 FIRST SENATE DISTRICT WOMAN OF DISTINCTION

KENNETH P. LAVALLE August 27, 2020

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August 26, 2020 Port Jefferson NY: New York State Senator Ken LaValle today honored Denise Civiletti as his 2020 Woman of Distinction. “Each year the Woman of Distinction Program provides members of the Senate with an opportunity to honor extraordinary women for their achievements. I am proud to celebrate Denise Civiletti as this year’s Woman of Distinction for her achievements in journalism and her dedicated community

service,” said Senator LaValle.

According to Senator LaValle, Denise Civiletti is the co-founder, editor and co-publisher of RiverheadLOCAL, which covers the eastern Long Island community of Riverhead and surrounding areas. Ms. Civiletti launched RiverheadLOCAL with her husband, Peter Blasl, in 2010. Today, the site reaches over 150,000 visitors each month, providing online daily coverage of town and county government, education, health, environment and community news. As a past editor and co-publisher of local newspapers and several niche print publications, Ms. Civiletti led an editorial and production staff of 30 and managed the paper’s navigation into the world of digital media. Ms. Civiletti set out to forge a sustainable, online-only local news model. Her vision and passion for local news, new technology and the Riverhead community came together in RiverheadLOCAL, at a time when independent online local news was still in its infancy. RiverheadLOCAL is today one of the most successful independent local news websites in the United States.

“The Woman of Distinction Program provides an opportunity to recognize woman throughout New York for their contributions to business, academics and civic life. Denise Civiletti is now among current and past honorees recognized for this distinction for her contribution to her community and this great state,” said the Senator.

“I’ve always been dedicated to community journalism, because I’m dedicated to our community. We cover the stories that have the most impact on people’s lives, day in and day out. It’s challenging, all-consuming and certainly far from glamorous, but it’s important work — especially in the age of social media, where too often rumor and misinformation prevail. Local journalists sort facts from rumors and present news in context. It’s more important than ever to make sure local news survives,” said Denise Civiletti.

Denise Civiletti's work in journalism has garnered numerous awards, including New York Press Association writer of the year (2014) and investigative reporting (2018) awards.

Ms. Civiletti is a founding member of LION Publishers, a national organization of local independent online news publishers, where she is a past member of its board of directors. She is a member of the Society of Professional Journalists and Investigative Reporters and Editors. Ms. Civiletti holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Stony Brook University (1979) and a law degree from New York University School of Law (1982). She is admitted to practice in the State and federal courts. Ms. Civiletti was elected Riverhead Town Councilwoman in 1987 at the age of 29, becoming the first woman elected to a full four-year term in the Town's history. Married for 28 years to Peter, they are the proud parents of two adult daughters, Katie and Courtney — also Stony Brook grads and the next generation of local news publishers in Riverhead.

Due to the pandemic, the usual ceremony in Albany was changed to a virtual event. Each honoree's photograph and biography will become part of a special online exhibit proclaiming the contributions of these exemplary New York women.