



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

Della Moore, Founder of the African American Center for Cultural Development, Selected as NYS 2021 Woman of Distinction by Senator Borrello

GEORGE M. BORRELLO August 6, 2021

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ALBANY – Della Moore, the founder and director of the African American Center for Cultural Development in Olean, N.Y., will be honored as the New York State Senate 2021 “Woman of Distinction.”

Senator George Borrello said he selected Ms. Moore as the 57th Senate District's honoree in recognition of her efforts to preserve the history of African Americans throughout the region, and her more than four decades of community leadership and volunteerism.

Established in 1998, the New York State Senate Woman of Distinction Award is hosted annually to pay tribute to women who have demonstrated remarkable character, initiative and commitment in serving their neighbors, strengthening our communities and acting as role models.

"Since she moved to Olean in 1972, from her native Philadelphia, Della Moore has devoted her life to helping others and giving back to her adopted hometown," Senator Borrello said.

"While she will tell you she didn't do it alone, Ms. Moore has been the driving force behind the creation of the African American Center for Cultural Development in Olean.

"For more than 10 years, Ms. Moore overcame every obstacle in her way and now the center has a permanent home on North Barry Street Olean. Were it not for her boundless faith, patience and persistence, the history and contributions of African Americans in our community would be lost. She is an amazing leader and I am very proud to honor her as this year's Woman of Distinction."

Ms. Moore founded the African American Center for Cultural Development in 2010. As the center's director, she has worked to raise awareness of the talents, lives and history of African Americans in the Southern Tier and of the region's key role in the Underground Railroad.

"African American history is American history. The center is for everybody. Our goal is to create a safe haven where people can learn their history and go on and share what they learn," she said. "My personal belief is, if you don't know your history, your roots are

dangling. You're not anchored. You have to know your history before you can go forward.”

Many throughout the Olean area met and befriended Ms. Moore during her 32 years working at Tops Friendly Markets in Olean. Greeting everyone she met with an enthusiastic, “How are you doing?” Ms. Moore wasn't shy about hugging friends and acquaintances in the store's aisles. She began her career as a cashier at Tops in 1972 shortly after moving to Olean and left as a department manager.

Despite the demands of family and work, Ms. Moore constantly sought to enhance her education, earning an Associate's Degree from Alfred University, a Bachelor's Degree in English from St. Bonaventure University, a Master's Degree in history from St. Bonaventure University and a Master's Degree in black history from Temple University.

She has taught at Jamestown Community College and at Julius Nyerere University of Kankan in Guinea, West Africa.

Known for her community involvement and volunteerism, Ms. Moore has served on the Olean City School District Board of Education, the Genesis House Board of Directors, the NeighborWorks Board of Directors and the Cattaraugus County Arts Council Board of Directors.

Ms. Moore also serves on the Greater Olean Area Council of Churches Board of Directors, the Rebuilding Together Board of Directors, the Historians Advisory Committee for the Cattaraugus County Planning and Tourism Department and the Olean Historical Society Board of Directors. She has volunteered at the Olean Food Pantry and at the Olean Family YMCA as well as the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help and with AmeriCorps.

She said at 82, she has no plans to slow down. She said she always had faith that the African American Center for Cultural Development would find a permanent home and continue its mission.

“I am doing what God has instructed me to do and all the glory goes to Him,” she said. “When I retire from the Center, I know there will be something else and I’m OK with that. I’m grateful for every day.”

Ms. Moore was raised in a family with three sisters, a brother and a niece, who was like a sister, by her father and mother, Robert Lee and Opense Patten. Ms. Moore said she learned African American history from her mother and her Aunt Gladys, “because it wasn’t taught in school.” She and her late husband, Jimmy Moore, moved from Philadelphia to Olean, where he grew up, to raise their son and daughter. She also has two grown grandchildren.

Senator Borrello said Ms. Moore embodies the ideals at the heart of the Woman of Distinction Award.

“Della Moore’s commitment to her community is an inspiration and example to us all. She’s a role model to women and men of all ages and has touched countless lives,” Senator Borrello said. “We owe her an enormous debt for creating the African American Center for Cultural Development. Her legacy of service to her community and its history deserves our recognition, admiration and thanks.”

Ms. Moore will be honored during a ceremony at United Methodist Church in Olean this September.

