



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Senator O'Mara honors Food Bank of the Southern Tier President and CEO Natasha Thompson as a NYS Senate 2021 'Woman of Distinction'

THOMAS F. O'MARA September 28, 2021

| ISSUE: **WOMEN OF DISTINCTION**



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of appreciation, gratitude, and respect.

**Elmira, N.Y.**—State Senator Tom O’Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today presented Natasha Thompson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, with an award honoring her as a 2021 New York State Senate “Woman of Distinction.”

Thompson represented O’Mara’s 58th Senate District as part of the Senate’s 23rd Annual “Women of Distinction” celebration and joined more than 60 other honorees representing state senatorial districts from throughout New York who were recognized as part of a virtual “Women of Distinction” celebration in late August.

Earlier today, O’Mara visited the Food Bank to personally present Thompson’s award.

O’Mara said, “It is a great honor for me personally to pay this tribute to Natasha for her outstanding and steadfast commitment to our communities. She truly is a ‘Woman of Distinction.’ The Southern Tier region is fortunate to have her leadership and tireless advocacy working on our behalf day after day, year after year. For more than two decades, Natasha’s unwavering belief in the mission of the Food Bank has stood out for so many of us, especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic when the Food Bank has been a lifeline of hope for residents and families across this region. On behalf of the 58th Senate District, I am proud to extend this well-deserved and well-earned tribute of appreciation, gratitude, and respect.”

“It is truly an honor to be named a 2021 Woman of Distinction,” stated Thompson, “and to know that the critical work of the Food Bank does not go unnoticed. I have been blessed to lead a smart, talented, and caring team, who consistently go above and beyond to feed our neighbors in need and build community around food. I am grateful to Senator O’Mara for the recognition, as well as for his consistent support of our work over the years.”

The Senate's annual program, which began in March to coincide with Women's History Month, allows senators statewide to select one honoree from their respective legislative districts to be celebrated for their significant accomplishments, service, and contributions to the quality of life within and beyond their communities.

Prior to COVID-19, honorees were recognized at an in-person awards ceremony and reception at the Legislative Office Building in Albany. Over the past two years, because of the pandemic, the Senate has conducted a virtual "Women of Distinction" tribute. The Senate's 2021 "Women of Distinction" virtual ceremony can be viewed [HERE](#).

Thompson has been with the Food Bank of the Southern Tier since 2001 and in her current position as President and CEO since 2008. She began her career as an Americorps\*VISTA volunteer at the Rhode Island Community Food Bank in 1997.

Under Thompson's leadership, the Food Bank was recognized in 2017 with Feeding America's prestigious "Food Bank of the Year" award.

In 2020, the Food Bank of the Southern Tier saw an unprecedented increase in demand for food due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many food banks across the nation, Thompson had to completely shift the Southern Tier's entire operation to respond quickly to fast-changing community needs while ensuring the safety of staff, volunteers, and clients. Thompson helped her team successfully navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic. The Food Bank of the Southern Tier ended the year with a record-breaking distribution of 17.6 million pounds of food, a 40% increase over 2019.

Thompson has worked with countless people throughout the Southern Tier who are committed to helping their neighbors and making their communities stronger. Since 2018, she has hosted Chasing the Dream, a local public affairs program on WSKG-TV which

highlights stories of individuals and organizations who are working to make a difference.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology & Religion, and a Masters of Business Administration, both from the University of Rochester. She served as the Chair of Feeding New York State from 2016-2018 and was a member of Feeding America's National Council of Food Banks, representing the Eastern Region, from 2012-2016. She currently serves on the board of Feeding New York State and the Community Foundation of Tompkins County.