



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara pays tribute to area small business leader as a 2023 New York State Senate 'Woman of Distinction': Elmira native Nancy Kirby has mentored many regional success stories

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 16, 2023

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Albany, N.Y., May 16—On Tuesday evening in Albany, State Senator Tom O’Mara (R-C, Big Flats) and the New York State Senate recognized Nancy Kirby, a longstanding advocate and leader for small businesses and entrepreneurship throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, as a 2023 New York State Senate “Woman of Distinction.”

[The 2023 “Women of Distinction” ceremony was held in the Legislative Office Building. A video of the awards ceremony is available on the Senate website [HERE](#).]

Kirby, a native of Elmira, has been an established regional business owner, mentor to numerous small businesses still operating throughout the region, and is the former Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of IncubatorWorks in Painted Post, a leading Southern Tier economic development agency focusing on small business entrepreneurship. She is currently the Town Supervisor in Caton, Steuben County, and also continues as an “Entrepreneur in Residence” at IncubatorWorks.

Kirby represented O’Mara’s 58th Senate District as part of the Senate’s 25th Annual “Women of Distinction” celebration on Tuesday at the capital and join more than 60 other honorees representing state senatorial districts throughout New York. The 58th District covers all of Chemung, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, and Yates counties, and a part of Allegany County (the towns of Alfred, Almond, Amity, Andover, Birdsall, Burns, Grove, Independence, Scio, Ward, Wellsville, and Willing).

The Senate's annual recognition 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.

O'Mara said, "Nancy Kirby stands tall in the arena of economic development and small business ownership throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions. As a longtime small business owner herself and an early mentor to numerous small businesses still thriving throughout the region, Nancy's deep belief in and lifelong commitment to entrepreneurship has made enduring contributions to the growth, strength, and vitality of local communities and local economies. I am proud to take this opportunity to pay tribute to her achievements, leadership, and unwavering vision, all of which represent the best of what the New York State Senate seeks to honor through our annual 'Women of Distinction' recognition. Her lifelong devotion has made an enormous difference. Nancy has been a lifeline and a foundation of support for countless success stories across this region. I am truly pleased this year, on behalf of the 58th Senate District, to be able to extend this well-deserved and well-earned tribute of appreciation and respect."

Ashleigh Madison, Executive Director of IncubatorWorks, said, "As a natural-born leader, Nancy has always had a passion to inspire, educate, and support her community members while helping them thrive. Nancy's knowledge, wisdom, and personality are well respected and liked by all. Throughout her many career roles, including being one of the first women in New York State to found and establish a CPA firm and as Executive Director of IncubatorWorks, Nancy has taught, coached, and mentored, impacting and quite literally helping to change the lives of so many. IncubatorWorks celebrates and congratulates Nancy on this well-deserved recognition."

During her nine-year tenure as the Executive Director and CFO of IncubatorWorks, before her retirement last June, Kirby guided the emergence of this Southern Tier economic development agency into a regional leader in the growth of small business entrepreneurship. Under her direction, influence, and decades of experience as a financial professional, founder of her own accounting firm, and early mentor to small businesses still operating throughout

the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, IncubatorWorks developed an impressive array of resources to partner with local industry, academia, and other economic development agencies offering training and support for regional entrepreneurs, with a focus on serving diverse and underserved communities.

Kirby credits her own experience as a Contract CFO for clients of the local firm she founded and operated for 26 years, as well as her commitment to volunteerism and mentoring, for the qualities of collaboration, leadership, teamwork, and vision that define her lifelong work and her career at IncubatorWorks.

Reflecting on her years at IncubatorWorks, **Kirby has said**, “Working to support entrepreneurship, in the area I grew up in and had my own business for 26 years, has been a dream come true. Building on my experience as a Contract CFO for so many years in my CPA firm, along with my decades of volunteer experience and mentoring, has been very rewarding.”

A native of Elmira, Kirby has been deeply committed to her community in a variety of roles, including, in recent years, as a member of the Board of Directors for organizations such as Chemung-Schuyler-Steuben Workforce New York (CSSWFNY), Corning PRIDE, and the Southeast Steuben County Library.

O’Mara’s past “Women of Distinction” honorees have included:

> Carol Berry of Hornell, a longstanding regional library professional and director of the Dormann Library in Bath;

> Virginia “Ginny” Houseknecht of Watkins Glen, a longtime area Cornell Cooperative Extension educator and leader, and founder of the Southern Tier Parkinson’s Disease Support Group;

- > Beverly “Bev” Stamp, co-owner and operator of Lakewood Vineyards in Watkins Glen, a long-time and beloved ambassador of New York State’s nationally and internationally renowned wine and grape industry;
- > Lauren R. Snyder, a public health professional from Penn Yan who served as the Yates County Public Health Director for 28 years before retiring in 2009;
- > Linda Thomas, owner and operator of the Wellsburg Diner and recipient of a prestigious “Small Business Excellence Award” from the U.S. Small Business Administration;
- > Dawn R. Smith, Transition and Care Management (TCM) Program Manager at the Bath VA Medical Center and a well-known local veterans advocate;
- > Carmella Hoffmann, Owner and Operator of Sunset View Creamery in Odessa (Schuyler County);
- > Kathryn J. Boor, a native of Chemung County and the Ronald P. Lynch Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) at Cornell University; and
- > Pauline “Polly” Holbrook, a longtime stalwart of civic affairs in the city of Hornell and the Canisteo Valley;
- > Natasha Thompson, longtime President and Chief Executive Officer of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier.