



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Tedisco

## Tedisco Honors Anti-Bullying Advocate Isabella Sementilli as a New York State Senate “Woman of Distinction”

JAMES TEDISCO May 17, 2023

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**Albany** - - Senator Jim Tedisco (R,C-44<sup>th</sup> Senate District) and his colleagues in the New York State Senate in Albany tonight honored Niskayuna resident Isabella Sementilli as a “NYS Senate Woman of Distinction” for her inspiring efforts to survive a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and educate others about overcoming challenges and reducing incidents of school bullying.

“Isabella Sementilli experienced terrible bullying at school that caused her to receive a traumatic brain injury that changed her life forever. But Isabella has turned her own personal challenge into something positive by using her talents and love of cooking to start her own successful small business and be a role model and powerful voice for raising public awareness of the serious impact of bullying and brain injuries,” said Senator Jim Tedisco.

In 5<sup>th</sup> grade, a school bully yanked Isabella’s chair out from under her, causing a concussion, fractured tailbone, and neck and back injuries. The effects of the concussion left Isabella with NDPH and Occipital Neuralgia--two rare and debilitating headache disorders. Tap dancing and tennis lessons were quickly replaced with doctor appointments, specialist visits, MRIs, X-rays, and years of physical therapy. The TBI forced Isabella, who loved going to school, to be home-schooled from 8<sup>th</sup> grade until graduating from high school in 2021.

Although Isabella faced many obstacles, that did not deter her from trying to make a positive difference. Isabella tweaked her Papa’s Italian cookie recipe to make it her own creating “Iznettes® ” – small, peanut and tree-nut free cookies with icing and sprinkles. She started to sell them at her family’s restaurant, *Scotti’s Restaurant and Pizzeria* in Schenectady. Isabella now has a U.S. Registered Trademark on Iznettes® and her motto “Never Crumble!® .”

Sementilli wrote, illustrated and published a children’s book, “*The Short Story of One Tough Cookie : A True Story!*” to share her message “Be nice. Be kind. Share a smile” and no matter what, “Be strong, Be a tough cookie, and most importantly, ‘Never Crumble!® ’”

Isabella started her own business-*Bella Cervella*, Italian for “beautiful brain” and her own line of Never Crumble!® apparel, hats and healing stone bracelets and recently released a Never Crumble!® doll. She donates the proceeds from the sale of her Iznettes® and Never Crumble!® products to anti-bullying and brain awareness organizations.

Sementilli previously received the Ruth Bader Ginsberg Agent of Change Award, Neil & Jane Golub Making A Difference Award from the Anti-Defamation League of NY, Hearts and Heroes Award, the COVID-19 Acts of Kindness Heroes Award, Literary Champion Award, and was an Awardee for the #WhoCaresIDo International Challenge for standing up to bullying. Isabella was featured in Cricket Media FACES Magazine “Kids Changing the World: Cookies For A Cause.”

She also initiated the “Isabella Marie Sementilli Never Crumble!® Scholarship” at Niskayuna High School, which is presented to a student who has overcome an obstacle in their life.

When Isabella is not working at her family’s restaurant, she’s sharing her story and positive message of overcoming obstacles at schools, town halls and events.