



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Alexis Weik

## Senators Award Liberty Medal to School Worker Who Saved Child's Life

ALEXIS WEIK May 18, 2023

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Senators Mario R. Mattera (2<sup>nd</sup> Senate District) and Alexis Weik (8<sup>th</sup> Senate District) recently joined together to honor teacher's aide Stella Tsimis for her life-saving actions this past February. Stella, who lives in Nesconset and works in Helen B. Duffield Elementary School in Ronkonkoma, jumped into action to save a choking student during lunch.

“Stella Tsimis is one of those rare individuals who took immediate action and helped save the life of one of her students. She was there for those in her care in a way that many will never face and which fewer will act as rationally. She was there without hesitation, and I am honored to join with Senator Weik to recognize her heroic actions,” stated Senator Mattera.

“The Liberty Medal is the highest civilian honor that someone can receive from New York State and is only awarded for extraordinary, heroic and life-saving acts,” added Senator Alexis Weik, the two elected officials providing a glimpse into Tsimis’s character before describing the heroic efforts that led to her award.

In the incident at the school, Stella stepped up during lunchtime when seven-year-old Seren Mavruk was sitting in the cafeteria with her two second-grade friends and started choking. Stella suddenly heard some students yelling and saw Seren’s two friends, Logan and Autumn, calling out for help.

At that point, Stella noticed that Seren’s face was turning red and was indicating that she was struggling. The student later told News 12 Long Island that was she was choking so hard that she was getting dizzy and could barely see.

Stella “stepped up without hesitation” according to her Principal Lisa Farrell. She performed the Heimlich maneuver to extract the food.

“I just did what I would hope anyone would do and I’m glad I knew what to do,” Stella said modestly of her heroic actions. On that day, Seren gave Stella a hug and the students drew her a picture on a poster board that was surrounded by stars and hearts and read: Thank You HERO – which Senators Weik and Mattera both agree.

Senator Mattera described Tsimis as a longtime resident in his district who is known by neighbors as a loving, supportive wife to her husband George and a dedicated mother to her

four boys: Elias, Alexander, Zachary and Michael, who range in age from 6 to 18. Her husband George, a small-business owner, affirmed that she always puts her family first but that her love and care extend way beyond her family.



While researching Tsimis for the Liberty Medal application process, one that had to be approved by the Senate, Senate staff discovered that Stella was well-known for the kindness and generosity she bestows upon everyone she meets. They also learned that Stella had a natural talent for connecting viscerally with children who are drawn to her infectious energy and playful spirit. Peers, friends and colleagues all stated that she has a heart of gold

and cares deeply about the well-being of everyone around her as a kind, compassionate woman who is always there for anyone in need.

Professionally, Stella spent many years working in the healthcare sector and has been responsible for taking and recording patient vital signs, performing EKG's, managing in-office testing, and handling medical specimens at topline institutions such as Northwell Health and Peconic Bay Medical Center. She was trained in CPR and various life-saving techniques.

Despite both a busy professional and home life, she dedicates her time to volunteering for several organizations. At the Ronald McDonald House, Stella worked to house underfunded, cancer-stricken children and families from all around the world. At the Saint Basil Academy, she participated in the institution's mission to help children with homeless mothers. At the Feal Good Foundation, she assisted injured emergency personnel, many of them the first responders we call heroes.

"Stella is not a one-day hero, she is a role model for the very students she serves, and I hope that she and her entire family are proud today. Thank you Stella for being there and for serving as an inspiration to so many," added Senator Mattera.

"It was just another day of Stella caring, acting and thinking of others rather than herself. Stella's swift and selfless action truly exemplifies her remarkable commitment and dedication as a teacher, and we are honored to have teachers like this right here in our community," Senator Weik concluded.