

Women of
DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

MAY 2017





Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins



Senator John J. Flanagan



Senator Jeffrey D. Klein



Women of
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HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

May 9, 2017

Dear Friends,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to this year's Women of Distinction celebration. Sponsored by the New York State Senate, this event showcases outstanding women living and working in New York State whose contributions have greatly enriched the quality of life in their communities and beyond.

From the women's suffrage movement 150 years ago to the present day, women have played a crucial role in New York State's political, social and economic development. Today we recognize a select group of women who represent the qualities of leadership, compassion, and diligence. Let us celebrate their hard work and subsequent success individually, but also be mindful that today's honor spotlights the groups they are involved in and the causes they fight for.

These New York State women of outstanding accomplishment and importance are well-deserving of today's recognition. Many of the honorees have overcome battles, given countless hours of service to their community, and achieved extraordinary milestones.

On behalf of the New York State Senate, we would like to send our warmest regards to all of you attending the Women of Distinction celebration, and we offer our sincerest congratulations to all of the women being honored in today's celebration. Your dedication, commitment and success are an inspiration for all New Yorkers.

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Democratic
Conference Leader

Senator John J. Flanagan
Temporary President of the Senate
Majority Coalition Leader

Senator Jeffrey D. Klein
Independent Democratic
Conference Leader
Majority Coalition Leader

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NEW YORK STATE SENATE

Women of
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HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Program

Inspirational Reading by:

Maureen McAuliffe

Welcoming Remarks

Senator Elizabeth Little
Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senator Jeffrey D. Klein
Senator John J. Flanagan

Presentation of Awards

Julia Lilkendey

Closing Remarks

Senator Diane Savino

Musical Performance by:

Albany High School Albanettes
and
Troubadours



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The New York State Senate
is taking special note of the enormous
contributions that women have
made throughout the state and nation.

The women honored in this program
have enriched the quality of life in the

Empire State and beyond.

Their achievements should be
a source of pride and inspiration
to all New Yorkers.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Maria Bartolillo

*M*aria Bartolillo was born and raised in Brooklyn and is a self-described lifetime New Yorker. She has grown up loving and appreciating the buzz of the City, and has dedicated her life to the betterment of her community and city life as a whole.

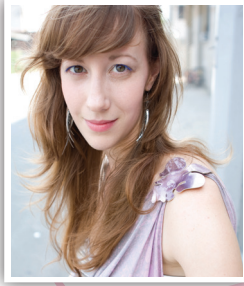
Currently, Ms. Bartolillo resides in downtown Manhattan. She attended college in Brooklyn and received her Master's degree from Hunter College. Ms. Bartolillo has always wished to dedicate her life to helping the less fortunate, and went on to obtain her New York State Certification in Deaf Education. After years of teaching deaf students, she became Department Supervisor, Principal, and then Director of St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf.

Ms. Bartolillo is the Treasurer of the 4201 Schools Association, a group of 11 schools in New York State that educate deaf, blind and physically challenged students. She is a member of the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development and serves as a member of the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf, a national organization.

Ms. Bartolillo has dedicated her life to the welfare of youth, her city and those with learning disabilities. These attributes make her a perfect New York State Woman of Distinction.

Maria Bartolillo was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Jesse E. Hamilton, III.





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Bob Bland

Bob Bland is one of the founders and national co-chairs of the Women's March on Washington. A first time activist and organizer, she is the proud mother of two young daughters, including her infant Chloe, whose birth coincided with the commencement of the March.

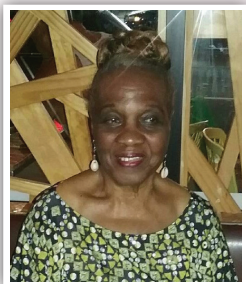
Fortune magazine recently included Ms. Bland on their list of the 50 World's Greatest Leaders.

Ms. Bland is also the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Manufacture New York, a social enterprise that is rethinking the fashion ecosystem. An international speaker and advocate for domestic manufacturing, ethical supply chains and design entrepreneurship education, Ms. Bland has presented Manufacture New York as a case study at the United Nations and in Copenhagen, Seoul, Los Angeles, Raleigh, Las Vegas, Washington, D.C. and New York City.

Ms. Bland also has been featured in two books, *Sustainable Fashion: Past, Present & Future* (2015), *We Own the City* (2014), and the film *Making It In America: Empowering Global Fashion*. She has given multiple television interviews, including with CBS Evening News.

Bob Bland was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Daniel Squadron.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Melba P. Brown

*M*elba P. Brown has been an educator for more than four decades. Throughout her career, she taught on both the elementary and high school levels, beginning her professional career at Epiphany Lutheran School as Dean of Students and later accepting a position at Public School 306. During her tenure as a teacher, she became an inspiring role model to the students and changed the lives of many she met.

In addition to her teaching career, Ms. Brown is extremely involved in her community. She genuinely cares about the well-being of her neighbors and takes a relentless approach to working on their behalf.

Throughout the years, Ms. Brown has given her time and talent to numerous community organizations, including serving as recording secretary for the 69th Precinct Community Council, First Vice-President of the New Image Lions Club, board member of the Brooklyn Alzheimer's Disease Assistance Center, board member of the South Canarsie Civic, President of the East 105th Street Block Association and founding member of Canarsie by Choice.

Ms. Brown is a proud member of Church Women United, whose main goal is not only the uplifting of Christians, but also of society as a whole. She is a member of Saint Matthew's Roman Catholic Church, where she serves in the leadership roles of lector, extraordinary minister, baptism minister and religious education teacher.

Ms. Brown was educated at both Wagner and Brooklyn colleges in New York City, and has also attained a certificate from prestigious Harvard University.

A truly remarkable person, Ms. Brown works tirelessly to improve the quality of life for others. Her dedication to her family and community is incomparable. She is the proud mother of two daughters, Jewel A. Brown, a health care compliance officer, and Deborah V. Jones, a retired United States Army veteran. She is also the loving grandmother of Coretta, Connie and Dylan.

Melba P. Brown was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Roxanne J. Persaud.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Laura Casamento, Ed.D.

*L*aura Casamento, Ed.D. is the ninth president and 14th Chief Executive Officer of Utica College, and the college's first woman president in its 70-year history. After receiving her Doctorate of Education from the University of Pennsylvania and a Masters of Business Administration from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Dr. Casamento has dedicated herself to making a college education accessible and affordable.

Since joining Utica College in 2004, Dr. Casamento has played a major role in strengthening the college's financial stability and outlook to improve its teaching and learning environment while enhancing every student's educational experience. First, as Executive Vice President, she led the way to make history and garnered national attention by dramatically lowering Utica College's tuition at a time when students were challenged by mounting college debt. With her bold vision and leadership, Dr. Casamento has passionately embraced greater opportunity for higher learning.

Dr. Casamento has realized her many laudable achievements through a lifetime of hard work, including more than 20 years of senior executive experience in the private sector and higher education. From 1998 through 2002 she was President and Chief Operating Officer of Herkimer County Trust, an independently owned, state-chartered bank.

A lifelong resident of the Mohawk Valley, Dr. Casamento remains committed to the region's success and currently serves on the boards of directors for Mohawk Valley Economic Development Growth Enterprises, the Kelberman Center for Autism Services, Patriot Federal Bank, and the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties. She is actively involved in many aspects of the community, having also served on the boards of Excellus-Utica Region and the Women's Fund, and as Campaign Chairperson for the United Way of the Greater Utica Area.

Dr. Casamento is married to Philip Casamento, and together they have five children and four grandchildren.

***Laura Casamento, Ed.D. was selected as a 2017
Woman of Distinction by Senator Joseph A. Griffo.***





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HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Molly Biggs Celani

*M*olly Biggs Celani's motto is Exceed Expectations! These two words are the driving force behind every aspect of her life.

After graduating from The College of St. Rose, Ms. Celani taught for 35 years in the North Colonie School District at the Loudonville School and was Director of Continuing Education at Shaker High School.

Retirement was the beginning of exciting new challenges. In Florida, Ms. Celani and her husband bred thoroughbred horses, raced their three-year-old colt and owned a bike and rollerblade rental shop. She also developed time management strategies for the Mayor of Hollywood, Florida and her staff.

Parental responsibility drew Ms. Celani back to her hometown of Granville. When the Slate Valley Museum needed a volunteer with a formal background in education, she quickly offered and began teaching about the geology of slate, the technology of extracting it from the ground, and about the immigrants who came to the Slate Valley in search of a new life. Ms. Celani was invited to join the Board of Trustees, and since 2011, has served as its President. After creating a disaster plan, she quickly realized its value when Hurricane Irene hit the museum and the nearby Mettowee River.

After filling two vacancies and being twice elected to the Granville Board of Education, Ms. Celani now heads its policy committee and is concentrating on increasing mastery levels, lowering dropout rates, curriculum development and BOCES programs. She serves as the Secretary of the Granville Lions Club, working on its major fundraiser and successfully generating substantial donations for the community.

Currently, Ms. Celani is Chair of the Village Zoning Board of Appeals and is on the Town's Board of Assessment Review. She is part of a grassroots effort to complete a 34-mile section of the Slate Valley Rail Trail through northern Washington County. In addition, she convinced the Slate Valley Garden Club to plant street gardens on Granville's Main Street, and as an active member of the Tri-County Garden Club of WNF&GA, she contributes floral design and horticulture displays in its flower shows.

Ms. Celani says it is too early to decide what she wants to be when she grows up, but whatever it is, it will. . . Exceed Expectations!

Molly Biggs Celani was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Elizabeth O'C. Little.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Pauline Chu

*P*auline Chu, President of the Chinese-American Parents' Association (CAPA), founded the organization in 1986 and has assisted thousands of immigrant families in assimilating and establishing homes in the Flushing area. CAPA's mission is to act as a liaison between families and local schools. In this role, Ms. Chu aids families – whose English skills and familiarity with the Board of Education system is limited – with their children's school placement, course selection and daily activities. Ms. Chu has also used CAPA to help parents promote their English skills and encourage families to participate in local activities and voter registration drives.

Born in Nanjing, China, Ms. Chu was raised in Taiwan and graduated from the National Taiwan Normal University. In 1967, she received a scholarship from the University of Minnesota and came to the United States as a graduate student majoring in Guidance and Counseling. She moved to New York in 1980 and raised two sons in Queens, both of whom attended local public schools, graduated from SUNY Albany and work as financial analysts.

Ms. Chu was elected to the Queens Community School Board 25 in 1986, and named President by the board in 1996. Under Ms. Chu's leadership, in October 1996, District 25 received a prestigious arts award from the NYS Council on the Arts. As President of the School Board, Ms. Chu also worked with legislators to ease district overcrowding by adding more classrooms and leasing space for kindergarten children.

In February 2001, Ms. Chu joined Long Island Business Institute as founding member of the Flushing Branch of the college. She was nominated and served as a New York State Democratic Committeewoman in 2001, and was re-elected in 2003 – the first Asian-American elected to this position.

In July 2004, Ms. Chu was appointed to Community Education Council District 25 by the New York City Queens Borough President. She oversees the administration and budget review of the district and plays an important role in bridging the gap between the district office, schools and parents.

Ms. Chu has worked tirelessly in public service, including on the board of the American Red Cross, the Queens Botanical Garden and the New York Gouvenor's Lions Club. She has served as a Director of Child Care, Inc., and the Day Care Council and the Chancellor's Task Force for the School Construction Authority.

Pauline Chu was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Toby Ann Stavisky.





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HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Sarah Chu

*S*arah Chu moved to New York City in 2003 to join the New York City Teaching Fellows. Ms. Chu made her home in the Yorkville neighborhood of the Upper East Side for its access to CIS 303, the Bronx school where she taught middle school science. It was a fitting choice, for Yorkville had a rich immigrant history and welcomed families – just like hers – who crossed oceans in search of opportunity in America.

Opportunity and fairness are principles Ms. Chu deeply values. After leaving public education, Ms. Chu continued to pursue her education interests and service to the city as a member of Community Board 8 Manhattan (CB8M) (2006-present) and the Community Education Council of District 2 (2009-2013). On CB8M, Ms. Chu co-chairs the Small Business Committee and is a member of the Landmarks and Zoning committees. She believes that CB8M is a critical forum for everyday people to have a say in what happens to their neighborhoods. Ms. Chu is proud of her work as a member of the Board of Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, a nonprofit organization that serves as a steward of the neighborhood's architectural legacy, livability, and sense of place.

Since 2008, Ms. Chu has worked for the Innocence Project, an organization that exonerates innocent people wrongfully convicted of crimes they did not commit. The misapplication of forensic science is a contributor to wrongful convictions, and as the Senior Forensic Policy Advocate, she pursues policy efforts to advance the validity and reliability of forensic science and initiatives to improve quality and transparency in the forensic science system.

Ms. Chu graduated from the University of California, San Diego with bachelors degrees in Biochemistry/Cell Biology and Communication, as well as a Masters in Biology. She also holds a Masters in Epidemiology from Stanford University.

Sarah Chu was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Liz Krueger.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Antonia Clemente

*A*ntonia Clemente is the Founder and Executive Director of The Healing Center, also known as Trinity Healing Center, Inc., a nonprofit organization committed to the intervention and prevention of family violence, abuse and sexual assault that serves people of diverse faiths, cultures and personal experiences. Ms. Clemente has more than 35 years of experience working within the community.

In 2000, Ms. Clemente established The Healing Center in response to the growing need to serve women and families affected by intimate partner violence. It is a place where women can begin the process of healing and restoring hope in their lives. In 2009, Ms. Clemente spearheaded a new project called The Daughters of the Lotus for teenage girls who witness and are victimized by violence in the home and in response to the growing epidemic of teen dating violence. The program encourages positive self-image, healing through the arts, goals development, creative activities and community action.

In 2010, Ms. Clemente saw the need to increase awareness about teen dating violence. Under her leadership, the NYC Teen Dating Violence Awareness Walk-a-Thon was created and is now in its sixth year. The Healing Center has expanded to include programs and services for children and for seniors experiencing elder abuse.

A tireless and passionate catalyst for change, Ms. Clemente is dedicated to working with women and children who are marginalized and suffer in silence, and envisions the eradication of family violence in the community. She prays that her actions will extend to the global community.

Ms. Clemente completed a two-year certification program in Pastoral Care Studies through the Blanton Peale Institute and one year of Clinical Pastoral Education at Long Island College Hospital, and she attended CUNY College of Staten Island. She is a member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, and has served on the Justice for Women Consulting Committee for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Her work has been featured in the documentary film, *What Harm Is It to be a Woman* and *I BELIEVE YOU: Faith's Response to Intimate Partner Violence*.

Antonia Clemente was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Martin J. Golden.





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HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Crystal Collins

*C*rystal Collins' philosophy about service is simple – work hard, stay committed and give each project your best effort.

As a community advocate and organizer, Ms. Collins has spent the past two decades bringing positive change in and around her community. Her volunteer work includes serving as the Mount Vernon 37th District Leader, Westchester County Senior Program Speaker, member of the board of the Youth Community Outreach Program (YCOP) of Mount Vernon, and of the Union Grove Missionary Baptist Church in the Bronx. She is a former Youth Church Director/Youth Advisor, past PTA President at Bronx Middle School #370 and is past PTA and Bronx Condominium Vice President.

In addition, Ms. Collins is co-creator and developer of the 2014 1st Annual Toy Drive for the Northeast section of the Bronx, working with law enforcement officials and officers in the 47th Precinct. Together, they've successfully assisted over 1,000 families by collecting and distributing more than 5,000 Christmas gifts in 2016.

Ms. Collins also organized the Northeast Bronx's 1st Annual Seniors' Dinner, "Dining in Elegance," for over 200 seniors, as well as a Back-to-School book bag giveaway that generated quadruple the donations and gift-giving since the inception of both. In her work with the YCOP youth program, Ms. Collins assisted in developing the after-school program and helped double enrollment within its first three months. The program has now reached maximum enrollment.

Ms. Collins earned a Bachelor of Arts in Business from the College of Mount Saint Vincent and a Master's Degree in Healthcare Systems and Policies. She is currently employed as the Secretary of the Mount Vernon Civil Service Commission and established a private event-planning business called CreativeSolutions – all while raising four sons ages 8 to 21.

She is the recipient of the Bronx Branch NAACP Freedom Fund Community Leader Award, the City of Mount Vernon Community Service Award and the New Flex Phenomenal Woman Award.

Crystal Collins was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Jamaal T. Bailey.





Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Miriam Colón

*M*iriam Colón was a theater, film and television actor, a defender of universal access to the arts, and founder of the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater. Born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, she launched her career at the age of 12 and starred in her first film, *Los peloteros* (The Baseball Players) for the legendary División de Educación de la Comunidad de Puerto Rico (DivEdCo).

Ms. Colón studied at the Actors Studio in New York under Elia Kazan and Lee Strasberg. In Hollywood, she joined the cast of popular television series, including *Bonanza* and *Guns smoke* and films like *One-Eyed Jacks* and *The Appaloosa* with Marlon Brando. She won over audiences, together with Al Pacino, in the role of Mama Montana in Brian De Palma's *Scarface*. Other starring appearances were in John Sayles' *Lone Star* and *City of Hope*, Billy Bob Thornton's *All the Pretty Horses*, and as the principal role in the film version of Rudolfo Anaya's novel *Bless Me, Última*.

Ms. Colón's work on stage was enduring, highlighted by the success of *The Oxcart*, by René Marqués in New York in 1966, starring with Raúl Juliá under Lloyd Richards' direction. The following year, Ms. Colón founded the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater. At a time when there were no other models for producing bilingual theater in Spanish and in English, Ms. Colón served and provided resources, education and training in the arts to youth and adults of Caribbean and Latin American origin. She was a pioneer in the field, bringing to light hundreds of playwrights and important works. Later, in consolidating the fusion with Bronx's Pregones Theater, Ms. Colón ensured the continuation of that legacy for future generations.

Throughout her formidable career, Ms. Colón received numerous awards and recognitions, among them eight honoris causa doctoral degrees, Golden Agüeybaná, the García Lorca Award from the University of Granada and the Image Award. In 2006, the Puerto Rican Institute of Culture dedicated its Theater Festival to her. In 2015, Ms. Colón received the National Medal of the Arts, the highest recognition for an artist in the United States, from then-President Barack Obama.

For countless artists across the nation, Miriam Colón was a wealth of imagination and courage.

*Miriam Colón is being honored posthumously as a 2017
Woman of Distinction by Senator José M. Serrano.*





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Samantha M. Curtis

*S*amantha M. Curtis – known to many as “Sami” – is more than just a “Woman of Distinction,” she is a true profile in courage and a source of inspiration to the people of the North Country and the entire Empire State.

When Ms. Curtis was just two years old, she lost her birth mother, Terri, to breast cancer. As a tribute to her mother, each year she participated in the Edward I. Moses Walk/Run for Life to raise proceeds for the St. Lawrence County Cancer Fund. Over the years, she became an accomplished fundraiser. In 2011, when she was just 12 years old, she won a special award for raising over \$10,000 for the Cancer Fund.

At the age of 13, Ms. Curtis was asked to join the Board of the St. Lawrence County Cancer Fund, making her the youngest person ever to serve as a member of its board of directors. Over the years, she has continued to raise thousands of dollars for local cancer charities and programs like the Jewels of Life, Hospice, Ryan’s Wish and the Ronald McDonald House, with every dollar going to help local cancer patients and their families.

Last year, Ms. Curtis had a malignant brain tumor removed. Within weeks, she and her friends organized a major fundraising event called “Help Sami Kick Cancer,” which raised \$62,000 for the St. Lawrence County Cancer Fund. Last year, she was awarded the New York State Senate’s Liberty Award for raising more than \$100,000 to fight cancer.

Ms. Curtis has helped raise awareness about breast cancer and all forms of the disease. She has helped people understand the importance of early detection. By example she has inspired countless others, from the Canton Golden Bears Women’s Basketball team to St. Lawrence University’s athletes, to join her personal campaign to help find a cure and help those who suffer from this deadly disease.

Samantha M. Curtis was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Patricia A. Ritchie.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Annette Casper De Jesus

*A*nnette Casper De Jesus was born in Manhattan and raised in the Bronx, and has dedicated her life to her community, whether it be by empowering youth or fighting against debilitating diseases.

Ms. De Jesus began her role as a community activist at a young age. During her college years, she rode a bike from Union City, New Jersey to the Bronx in an effort to raise funds for the fight against cerebral palsy. Her motivation was to honor her sister, Milagros, who lives with the condition.

In the 1980s, Ms. De Jesus began teaching children dance and arts in her spare time. In 2004, she founded Twin Park Kids, an organization dedicated to providing youth in the Bronx with a healthy environment in which they could develop socially, learn how to handle peer pressure, and become positive role models.

Ms. De Jesus has been a supporter of the American Cancer Society for more than 14 years. During that time, she has successfully established the organization "Captain A: Fighting the War on Cancer," which has not only become one of the most recognized organizations devoted to the fight against cancer in the Bronx, but has also assisted countless cancer patients and their families in acquiring the necessary services to face this challenging disease.

Ms. De Jesus has also been very active in a number of community organizations, including Grandparents Around the World, N.Y.A.G.V., National Night Out, Community Board 6, the Bronx Puerto Rican Parade, Latinos Unidos, New York Blood, the Davidson Community Center, and the Good Shepherd Beacon Program, to name a few.

A resident of Little Italy in the Bronx for approximately 40 years, Ms. De Jesus graduated from Taft High School and earned a degree in Liberal Arts at Borough of Manhattan Community College. She has raised three sons – Freddy and Alex, both of whom serve in the U.S. Navy, and Steven. All of her boys were adopted.

*Annette Casper De Jesus was selected as a 2017
Woman of Distinction by Senator Gustavo Rivera.*





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Julie Dostal, Ph.D.

*J*ulie Dostal, Ph.D. is the Executive Director of the LEAF Council on Alcoholism and Addictions, and has been with the organization since 1998. Dr. Dostal is also the Chair of the Otsego County Opiate Task Force, actively working with agencies, businesses, healthcare organizations and individuals to help stem the tide of the current opioid epidemic.

Dr. Dostal is a trusted leader and recognized authority on topics ranging from substance abuse prevention, addiction science, community coalition building to advocacy, media literacy and problem gambling.

Outside her daily responsibilities, Dr. Dostal works tirelessly to enlighten and educate others about the complex nature of addiction. She teaches an upper level course on addiction at SUNY Oneonta in the Department of Human Ecology, and is a New York State Master Trainer. Dr. Dostal is a sought-after speaker who frequently shares her knowledge and expertise at local, state, national and international events.

Dr. Dostal has earned recognition and respect on the national stage. She serves as President of the Professional Association of Council Executives, and is on the Board of Directors of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependencies (NCADD). As a woman in long-term recovery, she is especially proud of her work with NCADD, and is able to shed a light on this epidemic with knowledge from first-hand experience, sharing the story of her bravery and strength with the world.

Dr. Dostal's compassion for others, undying energy, and dynamic personality are instantly evident, no matter the challenge. At the heart of her work is the encouraging message, "Addiction is a preventable, treatable disease from which people can and do recover."

Julie Dostal, Ph.D. was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator James L. Seward.





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HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Antonia Figueroa

*A*ntonia (Toni) Figueroa was born in Puerto Rico and moved to New York as a child. After graduating from Bronx Community College, Ms. Figueroa completed undergraduate business coursework at Pace University. Shortly after, she began a 35-year career at Sony Music as a Credit Manager.

Although Ms. Figueroa retired briefly, she returned to work and served as a Supervisor for five years in the Accessibility Department at NYC Board of Elections. From there, she went into public service, serving as a Democratic District Leader in the 85th Assembly District and on the executive committee of Bronx Democratic County.

Ms. Figueroa gives of her time and talent as an active participant in the community. She has served as President of the 43rd Precinct Community Council, working in partnership with local law enforcement to enhance the quality of life in the southeast section of the Bronx. Due to her outstanding leadership abilities, Ms. Figueroa has succeeded in helping precinct officials preserve peace and reduce fear in her neighborhood, which consists of 20 housing developments, one- and two-family private homes, numerous apartment buildings and a busy commercial district.

Ms. Figueroa is an invaluable member of the Police Service Area 8 Community Council, located in the Throggs Neck Housing Development. Together with the Council and the local police, she has worked on numerous initiatives that address auto theft, high-tech vehicle and personal property identification, bicycle registration, counter-terrorism and the anti-terrorism hotline, to name a few. The Council has also helped develop the Law Enforcement Explorer Program to encourage young people between ages 14 and 20 to consider law enforcement as a career, and has promoted the Auxiliary Police Program and the Housing Bureau Cadet Corps Program.

As a member of the Neighborhood Advisory Board, Ms. Figueroa helps to identify Community Service Block Grant program priorities with the goal of reducing poverty and revitalizing low-income communities. She is also active at Holy Cross Church and even volunteers as an adult altar server.

Ms. Figueroa enjoys spending time with her husband, Junior; son, Chris; and their two daughters, Bruni and Jessica.

Antonia Figueroa was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Jeffrey D. Klein.





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Betty Ann Filkins

*B*etty Ann Filkins is a pillar of her community. She puts her heart and soul into everything she does, and her enthusiastic spirit has touched the lives of so many of her neighbors.

Ms. Filkins is a lifetime member of the Westerlo Fire Company, and in 1978, became the department's first female firefighter. She held many offices within the department throughout the years and was in charge of some of their most profitable fundraisers. She is also a certified EMT, and was a CPR instructor for 20 years.

When her younger brother was permanently crippled by a drunk driver in 1989, Ms. Filkins became actively involved in RID (Remove Intoxicated Drivers) as a speaker at conferences, in schools, and on victim impact panels.

As a member of the Rensselaerville Historical Society, Ms. Filkins co-wrote the book "People Made it Happen Here," a history of the Town of Rensselaerville. She is also a member of the American Legion Clark White Post 589.

Ms. Filkins put her fundraising skills back to work when her sister was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer. In addition to caring for her, and driving her to all her appointments, Ms. Filkins organized two successful fundraisers to help cover her sister's medical expenses and continues to be an active participant in charitable events organized by the Cancer Society.

Ms. Filkins has been recognized with the Albany Medical Center Heart Institute Outstanding Service Award, the American Heart Association Outstanding Volunteer Award, and as Westerlo Fire Company Firefighter of the Year.

All of this is accomplished in Ms. Filkins' free time! She works as an office manager for an Albany Medical Center clinic, where her work is so valued, they asked her to come back when she retired four years ago.

Ms. Filkins lives in Westerlo with Richard, her husband of 51 years. They have two daughters.

Betty Ann Filkins was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator George A. Amedore, Jr.





Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Annette Finch

*A*nnette Finch of Albion is a dynamic, dedicated and passionate advocate for low-income and disadvantaged families. She works diligently to provide programs, services, and opportunities that can enable all people to reach their highest potential.

Ms. Finch has worked for Community Action of Orleans & Genesee Counties since 1977, and because of her exceptional leadership skills, was appointed the organization's Director of Community Services in 1990. Her reputation as an outstanding administrator is a direct reflection of her love for and dedication to the individuals and families in her community who are struggling to become self-sufficient. Among other things, she assists them with emergency services, job training, clothing, and transportation, while ensuring that all of Community Action's clients are treated with dignity and respect.

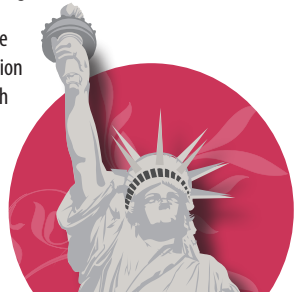
For 40 years, Ms. Finch has compassionately worked to initiate and develop life-changing programs through Community Action, including its garden projects, thrift store, care packages for veterans, school supplies for children, the annual holiday basket and coat drives. In addition, she has worked in conjunction with the Salvation Army's Red Kettle campaign and camp for low-income children, as well as the work release program through the Albion Correctional Facility to help teach life skills.

Ms. Finch has given her time, talent and energy to numerous local organizations over the years, serving as both an advisory committee and board member of the following: Orleans and Albion correctional facilities; the Village Recreation Committee for over 35 years; Treasurer of the Salvation Army Service Unit for Orleans County, where she has volunteered for 39 years; the Bereavement Committee for Holy Family Church; Genesee Community College; Job Corps; the statewide Angels in Action program; Food Link; and as Chairperson for Orleans County FEMA to name a few.

Ms. Finch has been honored for her community service with such awards as: Salvation Army Volunteer of the Year; Rosemary Fleming Memorial Award presented by the New York State Community Action Association; Orleans Chamber of Commerce Award for Community Service; Local American Legion Award for Continued Service; and a New York State Certificate of Recognition.

A true community leader, Ms. Finch is an exceptional woman whose life is a testimony to her devotion to others. She is truly an inspiration to the people and families she touches and the community in which she lives.

Annette Finch was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Robert G. Ort.





Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Sherif Fraser

*S*herif Fraser of East Flatbush, Brooklyn, was born and raised in Guyana, South America. She was influenced early in life by her parents' nurturing and guiding principles of being focused, disciplined and "always seeking knowledge and working to better one's self."

Ms. Fraser immigrated to the United States in 1982, and initially worked in the medical field as an assistant day care provider before moving to the Communications Center of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. She began her career in community service in 1987, first working with New York City Community Boards #3 and #9 before transferring to Community Board #17, where she is presently the District Manager.

Ms. Fraser is an exceptionally active volunteer. She is current President of the Guyana Unity Movement Inc., a non-profit organization she started in 2015, which brings together other Guyanese-Americans for volunteer efforts in their community. Ms. Fraser has also served on numerous advisory boards, including the Historic Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum, Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center, Kingsborough Psychiatric Center, Kings County Hospital Center and Battalion Christian Academy. In addition, Ms. Fraser is chairperson of her block association. She spearheaded the revitalization of several blocks and the creation of tenants associations. While walking the neighborhood, she encouraged local merchants, churches and residents along Utica and Church avenues to form a Merchants Association that now encompasses more than 30 blocks.

After months of discussion with the 67th Police Precinct, elected officials, business owners, former law enforcement officers and residents, Ms. Fraser helped form the Flatbush Civilian Observation Patrol (COP) program to address crime and gun violence in the community. Her love and admiration for seniors motivated her to reach out to the Department for the Aging (DFTA) to bring back a senior center to the East Flatbush community. After months of advocating on behalf of the seniors, the Remsen Senior Center returned to the East Flatbush district.

Sherif Fraser was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Kevin S. Parker.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Mary G. Garrote

*M*ary G. Garrote of Patchogue is a community advocate dedicated to the empowerment of women and a champion for human rights. Despite the barriers she faced as a woman in the male-dominated fashion manufacturing trade, she achieved success and recognition by her colleagues as a trailblazer and visionary.

After attending SUNY at Oneonta and the University of Miami, she built her manufacturing company at the age of 21. Later, as CEO/President of Kmart Corporation's Apparel Manufacturing Division, Ms. Garrote established the first manufacturing operation owned by a mass merchandiser. With 5,600 workers, and after only five years, the operation produced over 65 million garments annually and distributed to 2,700 stores nationwide.

In 2003, Ms. Garrote was named Director of Development and Community Relations for Girl Scouts of Suffolk County (GSSC). She worked on developing GSSC's STEM World Discovery Center for Girls, and promotes the Girl Scout mission through strong relationships in the corporate, community and government sectors.

Ms. Garrote is an active member of several chambers of commerce, the board of directors of the Child Care Council, the Association of Fundraising Professionals of Long Island, and on Pronto of Long Island's advisory board for many years.

A former board member and Chair of the Unity Committee of the Suffolk Community Council, Ms. Garrote worked to bring services and donations to well over 200 day laborers in Brentwood. She was appointed by the Suffolk County Legislature to serve on the Hispanic Advisory Board in 2006. Ms. Garrote is a proud founding member of Patchogue's Unity Coalition and has worked with Patchogue Village and the New York State Commissioner of Human Rights.

Ms. Garrote has received many honors and awards, including the Town of Brookhaven's 2010 Community Service and Professional Recognition Award, the 2010 Community Leadership Award from Pronto of Long Island, the 2011 Board Chair's Award by the Long Island Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the 2015 Innovator of the Year Award for STEM Innovation and Achievement by GSSC.

The daughter of Italian immigrants, Ms. Garrote lives her life "with intention, love and passion." She is the proud mother of four bright and accomplished children – Gene, Joseph, Kristin and Lauren – and the proud grandmother of Gabriella.

Mary G. Garrote was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Thomas D. Croci.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Donna B. Gerstle

*D*onna B. Gerstle is Director of the Center for Environmental Science and the Principal Investigator of the Staten Island Breast Cancer Research Initiative (SIBCRI) at the College of Staten Island/CUNY. In addition to her work as the Deputy Coordinator of the Environmental Science Master's Program and lecturing in the departments of Physics, Environmental Science, and Mathematics, Professor Gerstle is a former New York State Commissioner and Chair of the Interstate Environmental Commission. Dr. Gerstle holds a B.S. from Seton Hall University, an M.S. and an M.A. from the College of Staten Island/CUNY in Environmental Science and Environmental Education as well as a J.D. from New York Law School.

For more than 30 years, Dr. Gerstle has been studying environmental quality in New York, focusing on environmental carcinogens in the air and in water and the ways in which they affect the health of New Yorkers. Initially, her work focused on the high rates of cancer in its relation to air pollution among Richmond County residents. During her investigation, she discovered that Staten Island has had the highest breast cancer death rates among the five boroughs of New York City for the past 50 years.

Today, Dr. Gerstle leads a team of multi-disciplinary researchers and scientists investigating the causative factors as to why Staten Island women have such high breast cancer death and incidence rates. Because Staten Island is a population at risk, she developed and continues to execute a prevention education program for health care providers, community-based organizations, and educational institutions to improve health outcomes surrounding breast cancer.

For decades, Dr. Gerstle has lent her scientific, legal, and educational expertise to collaborate with government agencies and officials to promote a healthier environment.

Donna B. Gerstle was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Andrew J. Lanza.





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Mindy Germain

*M*indy Germain's passion for protecting the environment and serving others has helped transform the Port Washington community for the better.

Ms. Germain's desire to give back to the community began when, while out walking her infant daughter, she saw a group of volunteers picking up litter. Inspired by their devotion to their hometown, she joined the group, Residents for a More Beautiful Port Washington, and became its Executive Director. Over the last 10 years, Ms. Germain has tirelessly engineered community cleanups, beautification projects, downtown revitalization efforts and family events that bring people together with their neighbors. She has also collaborated with the Port Washington School District to help thousands of students learn about the importance of protecting our environment and ecosystem.

Ms. Germain is a leader in protecting Long Island's drinking water. She has led the Western Nassau County Aquifer Committee and played a key role in delivering the first comprehensive groundwater study for Long Island in decades. The study will provide local municipalities with modern data to help prevent contamination and address threats to Long Island's drinking water. As Port Washington Water District Commissioner, she has worked to enhance conservation efforts, increase public transparency and save taxpayer dollars through collaboration with other providers.

A graduate of Syracuse University, Ms. Germain is also a member of the Port Washington Chamber of Commerce, the Long Island Water Conference and the Nassau-Suffolk Water Commissioners Association.

In recognition of her many and continued contributions to her community, Ms. Germain has been named a Woman of Distinction by the Nassau County Legislature, is a member of the Town of North Hempstead's Women's Roll of Honor, and was honored by the Port Washington Chamber of Commerce for outstanding service to the Port Washington business community.

Ms. Germain and her husband, Victor, reside in Port Washington and are the proud parents of three children, Sophie, Gabriel and Harry.

Mindy Germain was selected as 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Elaine R. Phillips.





Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Enid Glabman

Enid Glabman was born and raised in Brooklyn and attended public school from elementary through high school before moving to Bayswater, Queens in 1957.

Mrs. Glabman later married and, during her husband's military service, served as secretary of a civic association at the off-campus Army base where her husband was stationed. She later served as Treasurer of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism for several years, as well as President of Metropolitan-Inter Collegiate House Plan Association.

A Hunter College graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Education as well as a Master's degree from Brooklyn College, Mrs. Glabman taught in the New York City public school system for 31 years, 21 of which she dedicated to P.S. 104. Although currently retired, she now teaches conversational English to Russian residents of Jewish Association Serving the Aging.

Mrs. Glabman stays active in community matters and is currently the Board Chairperson of the Bayswater Civic Association. She still attends many meetings of her local Community Board 14, as well as critical local community meetings, and meets monthly with a teachers' alumni group.

With her commitment to charitable causes and her determination to "always keep moving," Mrs. Glabman successfully took on the challenge of walking in the Susan B. Komen Race For a Cure for many years, along with her family and fellow team members. She has generously contributed to many social causes, especially to those that assist animals and the environment. In addition, Mrs. Glabman has received several awards, including the esteemed 2009 Sisterhood Honoree Award.

Mrs. Glabman has raised three wonderful children who proudly share in her accomplishments.

Enid Glabman was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator James Sanders Jr.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Betsy Goinski

*B*etsy Goinski believes, "If you put your mind to it, you can do it." The Erie County resident proved that point in 2014 when she took the oath of office as the first female Fire Chief of the Town of Elma Fire Company.

Ms. Goinski began her firefighting career with the Jamison Road Fire Company at the age of 16. She joined the Elma company in 2004 and holds certificates and degrees in Firefighting Essentials, Fire Police, Fire Attack, Incident Command, Aircraft Rescue, Arson Awareness, Emergency Medical Technician and other fire and first responder programs.

Prior to becoming Fire Chief, Ms. Goinski served as a Lieutenant and Assistant Chief. As leader of the department, she made volunteer firefighter recruitment one of her top priorities. Outside of firefighting, Ms. Goinski volunteers for numerous community groups and organizations. She also serves as Director of the Elma Senior Center.

Earlier this year, Ms. Goinski was honored as a Good Samaritan for helping a homeless man living in a field near her home. He was traveling from California to New York City and was robbed of his possessions. Ms. Goinski brought the man into her home, fed him, washed his clothes and helped him connect with a relative in New York City.

Ms. Goinski says the most influential people in her life were her grandparents, Matthew and Irene Serwacki, who instilled compassion and patience in her heart. She says that, because of them, she will continue to be a hard-working, understanding and dedicated individual.

Betsy Goinski was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Patrick M. Gallivan.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Mary M. Gooley

*M*ary M. Gooley was born in Watertown, and after briefly attending the University of Michigan, Ms. Gooley selflessly decided to drop out and return home to nurse her ailing father. This experience inspired her to become a medical technician. She trained under the guidance of Dorothy White, a nurse at Rochester General Hospital, and this relationship would be the start of wonderful and challenging future endeavors.

In the course of their clinic work, Ms. Gooley and Ms. White noticed a population of patients with a very debilitating blood disorder called hemophilia, who were in great need of additional care. Upon forming a bond with the mother of one of these patients, Dorthea Golemb, the three women decided to do something more for the hemophilia population. They organized a group of families, which in 1953 evolved into the Rochester Chapter of the National Hemophilia Foundation. In 1959, the members of the chapter board asked Ms. Gooley to establish a dedicated hemophilia treatment center to care for them and their children.

Determined and resourceful, Ms. Gooley worked tirelessly to obtain treatment for the patients. She had her work cut out for her – as a woman without a college degree in an era where women had to work extra hard, she was challenged with finding scarce resources for a rare medical condition. Ms. Gooley's determination helped her prevail as she succeeded in fighting administrators for a small clinic space and educating everyone around her on the needs of hemophilia patients. Hers became one of the first freestanding hemophilia treatment centers in the nation.

Ms. Gooley led the Center until her retirement in 1986. During that time, the Center was recognized nationally for its progressive model of care and advocacy for patients. She stayed active with the Center for many years on the Board of Directors and became a recognized national leader in blood disorders.

Mary M. Gooley was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Richard M. Funke.





Women of
DISTINCTION
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Marsha Gordon, Ph.D.

*M*arsha Gordon, Ph.D., leader of the county's largest and most influential business organization, brings more than 25 years of community, commerce and leadership experience to the Business Council of Westchester (BCW).

A sought-after speaker, panelist and media expert, Dr. Gordon is widely considered the authority on the business climate in Westchester County, and is regularly the "go-to" person on legislative and regulatory issues throughout the Hudson Valley.

Top-level business, community and political leaders throughout the county and New York State count on Dr. Gordon's counsel and expertise to move forward pro-business agendas in economic development, educational reform and workforce development, as well as legislative initiatives and business growth. Most importantly, at every opportunity, Dr. Gordon is regarded as the most effective connector of businesses of all sizes and community-based organizations, embracing the diversity of the business community the BCW represents.

Dr. Gordon values the importance of volunteering within her community; she serves on several boards, including the Business Council of New York State, the Westchester-Putnam Workforce Investment Board and Yonkers STRIVE, to name a few.

Dr. Gordon earned a Bachelor of Arts from Brooklyn College, a Master of Business Administration from Marist College, and a Doctor of Business Administration from Pace University. She resides in Greenburgh with her husband, Eli, and together they have a beautiful daughter, Bonnie.

Marsha Gordon, Ph.D. was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Minnie Graham

*M*innie Graham is the Founder and Executive Director of the Empowerment Zone, Inc., on Staten Island's North Shore. Through her organization, she provides career counseling, job preparation, basic computer classes, tenant organization, mediation, after-school homework help, Christmas and Thanksgiving giveaways, community clean-up, beautification, health fairs, markets, and HIV/AIDS and STD education for at-risk women. She also developed EmpowerGirls, a program for at-risk girls ages 12 to 16, which teaches life skills health, career exploration/job preparation, financial literacy and civic engagement.

Ms. Graham has a long history of community service, working diligently for almost three decades to help improve the lives of Staten Island's minority community. In 1989, while serving as Vice President of the Parent Teacher Association at Public School 57, she helped start the African-American Parent Council. In 1993, under her directorship, this group established the longest existing summer day camp and after-school program for at-risk youth in the Park Hill community, its first food pantry, the "Clothes Closet" for needy families, the "School on Saturday" program, and bilingual case management services for residents in five of Staten Island's poorest communities. She also co-developed the HIV/AIDS Parent Education Network for the Staten Island AIDS Task Force.

An active member of First Central Baptist Church for over 30 years, Ms. Graham has served as a trustee, Sunday school teacher, on the Usher's Ministry and currently as coordinator of the Singles' Ministry. She is one of the original members of the board of directors of the Central Family Life Center.

Ms. Graham earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology from the College of Staten Island and a master's degree in General Counseling from Long Island University, where she also received an Advanced Certificate in Family Counseling. She is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions.

Ms. Graham attributes her strength and courage to her late mother, Ruth, who always told her to do and be her best. She is the proud mother of two beautiful daughters who inspire her to never give up.

Minnie Graham was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Diane J. Savino.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Christine L. Haider

*C*hristine L. Haider of Flushing, Queens, has been a dedicated, hard-working advocate for the betterment of her neighborhood and surrounding areas. She is active in a wide range of organizations that serve her local community and is honored to serve as the Chair of Community Board 11Q (CB11Q). In addition, she serves on the finance and membership committees and is the Treasurer of the Community Advisory Board of the NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens. Ms. Haider is President of the Harding Heights Civic Association and is a member of the National Notary Association and the International Association of Administrative Professionals, having served as past-President of its Queens County Chapter. She is also a member of the 111th Precinct Community Council and the Saul Weprin Democratic Club.

As Chair of CB11Q, and Co-chair of the North Flushing/East Bayside Zoning Committee, Ms. Haider has successfully addressed such issues as neighborhood zoning, conducting site inspections and renewing variances, all while working to preserve the integrity and quality of life in her local community.

In 1965, Ms. Haider was named Executive Secretary of the National Industrial Conference Board in NYC. In 1978, after working as an executive secretary at Columbia University, she advanced to become administrator of the Partnership for Gender-Specific Medicine. From 2005-2007, Ms. Haider was asked by the military to use her skills as a human resources specialist to assist the area's New York Army National Guard medical recruiter with activated troops.

Ms. Haider is the recipient of many awards, including: the Community Board Service Award for 25 years of service to CB11Q; the Women's History Month Award; the Marjorie Matthews Advocacy Award from Health and Hospitals Corporation; the 2004 Administrative Professional of the Year from the American Lung Association; the Karen Cooper Award, "Wind Beneath My Wings," for outstanding support of New York Military Forces; the Outstanding Citizen Award and the Rosemary Gunney Award.

Married for 49 years to her beloved late husband, CW5 Howard C. Haider, Christine is the proud mother of their son, Howard Jr.

Christine L. Haider was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Tony Avella.





Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Haney Ho

*H*aney Ho is the Vice President of Brooklyn Chinese-American Association (BCA), a multi human services and community development organization serving the Asian-American communities of Brooklyn.

Born in Hong Kong, Ms. Ho received two Masters Degrees in Education from the University of California at Los Angeles and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, she worked as a high school teacher and Coordinator of the School Guidance and Counseling Program. In 1992, Ms. Ho arrived in New York City as a new immigrant and soon joined the Brooklyn Chinese-American Association. Since then, she has been working closely with the agency's President/Chief Executive Officer to transform the agency into a multi human services organization and community development organization to address the various community needs.

Currently, with approximately 400 staff members, BCA serves over 3,000 families daily at its 22 service sites in Sunset Park, Bay Ridge, Boro Park, Bensonhurst and Sheepshead Bay communities. BCA's services include bilingual social services, early childhood education programs, youth services, adult education programs, senior services, community economic development projects, crime prevention and victim services, naturalization assistance services, as well as other community activities.

Ms. Ho initiated the first Asian adult education program in southwest Brooklyn and has since expanded BCA's adult education services to assist over 1,200 immigrant adults yearly. Ms. Ho has been the key person in developing BCA's Early Childhood Education Program and securing government funds to expand the program. In 1995, when she initiated BCA's first day care center, it enrolled only 15 children. In the current school year, BCA's fully funded full day early childhood education programs include Head Start, UPK and ACS Early Learn Programs and serve more than 650 children at eight day care centers. Ms. Ho also helps develop numerous youth programs to serve thousands of youngsters during after school and summer hours.

From preschoolers to 100-year-old senior-center participants, from crime victims to newly arrived immigrants, Ms. Ho has enhanced their quality of life through a wide array of human services and has helped to make Brooklyn a better place for all.

Haney Ho was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Simcha Felder.





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Carmella Hoffman

*C*armella Hoffman is dedicated to her family, friends and community, which is evident in everything she does. Ms. Hoffman produces some of New York State's finest artisan cheese as the owner and operator of Sunset View Creamery in Odessa.

Ms. Hoffman and her husband, Ron, operate the 415-acre Hoffman Dairy in Schuyler County. The Hoffman family first settled on this Finger Lakes farm in 1905, and since 2004, Ms. Hoffman has built the farm's Sunset View Creamery from the ground up.

The farm and creamery are currently operated by the fourth and fifth generation Hoffmans, with the sixth generation currently learning the ropes of farming and cheese making! The farm milks approximately 50 to 60 cows every day, and no hormones or antibiotics are used in their milk or cheese production. Approximately 200 to 230 pounds of cheese are made twice a week, an amount expected to increase this year.

Ms. Hoffman serves as the Town Clerk/Collector and Court Clerk for the Town of Catharine, further distinguishing herself through professional excellence and continuing her lifelong commitment to civic and community service. She selflessly devotes her time and leadership to numerous groups, causes and organizations, including the Odessa Fire Department, Schuyler County Volunteer Ambulance Corps, Watkins Glen Area Chamber of Commerce, Girl Scouts and 4-H. She has contributed greatly to the quality of life in the greater Schuyler County community and has received numerous community, civic and business awards and honors for her dedicated service.

Ms. Hoffman remains a driving force behind the Finger Lakes Cheese Alliance, with Hoffman Dairy serving as the host farm for one of the Finger Lakes region's most anticipated events – the annual Finger Lakes Cheese Festival!

Carmella Hoffman was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Thomas F. O'Mara.





Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Charlotte Holstein

Charlotte (Chuckie) Holstein is a founder and recently retired executive director of F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse, a citizen-driven not-for-profit organization that promotes intelligent, inclusive and sustainable decision-making by citizens through education, outreach and engagement to foster change in Central New York.

Mrs. Holstein is a founder of Leadership Greater Syracuse and Youth Leadership Greater Syracuse, the Syracuse Commission for Women, Meals on Wheels, and the City/County Office on Aging. She also served President Jimmy Carter on the Advisory Committee for the White House Conferences on Families, Governor Nelson Rockefeller on the New York State Board of Social Welfare, and Governor Hugh Carey as a member of the New York State Division for Youth. In partnership with University College of Syracuse University, Mrs. Holstein was instrumental in founding the Citizens' Academy, a course of study about local governments. She chaired the Syracuse University School of Social Work Advisory Committee for many years and was instrumental in creating the All University Gerontology Center. She also served on the Syracuse College of Nursing Board of Advisors. A graduate of SUNY College at Brockport, Mrs. Holstein served on the board of the Brockport Foundation.

Mrs. Holstein served for 13 years as chair of Loretto, a multi-service cluster of organizations that provides care for older people. She spearheaded the development of The Nottingham, the first retirement community of its kind in New York State. Mrs. Holstein was vice-chair of the board at Manlius Pebble Hill School during the merger of the Manlius Military Academy and Pebble Hill School.

Mrs. Holstein has been married to Alexander Holstein, also a civic leader, for 70 years. They have four children, eight grandchildren, four step-grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. Each member of the Holstein family participates in civic engagement in their communities.

Chuckie Holstein often speaks of her family's commitment to the tradition of "tzedakah," a Hebrew word for righteousness, fairness and justice, and the responsibility to transmit these values from generation to generation, "L'dor V'dor."

Charlotte Holstein was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator David J. Valesky.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Florence E. Jackson-Frazier, M.S.W.

*F*lorence Jackson-Frazier, M.S.W., has long been recognized for her advocacy on behalf of children and families, and is a legend in the Capital Region. She is an historic civil-rights and social-work leader in her region and beyond.

The Huntington Station, Long Island native began her career in civil service at the age of 19. She raised a family and pursued studies part time, earning a Bachelor's degree from Siena College. In 1972, Ms. Frazier received a Master's degree in Social Work from Rockefeller College (now the School of Social Welfare) at the University at Albany.

As both a community leader and social worker, Ms. Frazier has championed the rights of the disenfranchised and disadvantaged. During her years as an employee of the NYS Department of Mental Health, she helped to establish the Capital District Psychiatric Center. Ms. Frazier's work with numerous foster care agencies in the region aided children whose family situations required they be placed in caring, nurturing homes. While on the board, her involvement with an ad-hoc committee of the Council of Community Services resulted in the creation of the Urban League of the Albany area and, subsequently, the founding of the League's Street Academy, an alternative high school for youth with academic and behavioral challenges.

Ms. Frazier has served as President of, and remains active with, the Albany District Links, Inc., and the M.C. Lawton Civic and Cultural Club, known nationally as providers of civic and cultural support to children, families, communities and organizations. She is also known for her work with the Legal Aid Society, the Visiting Nurses Association, the Albany City Human Rights Commission, the Albany Dispute Mediation Program, the Arbor Hill Community Center, and numerous other community organizations.

Florence F. Jackson-Frazier, M.S.W., was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Neil D. Breslin.





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Pauline Copes Johnson

*P*auline Copes Johnson is the great-great-grandniece of Harriet Tubman, the famous American abolitionist and conductor on the Underground Railroad. She was born and raised in Auburn, New York, and graduated from West High School in 1945.

Upon her graduation, Ms. Johnson was hired by the New York Telephone Company as the first African-American telephone operator in Cayuga County. It was through her work as an operator that she learned about the NAACP and became a member.

Along her journey, Ms. Johnson developed a passion for speaking about her famous Aunt Harriet. She has served as a docent at the Harriet Tubman Home in Auburn, and traveled to several states across the country to give presentations at schools and community centers on the life of Harriet Tubman. Her unwavering mission is to uphold her aunt's legacy and to teach the importance of history.

Ms. Johnson was very instrumental in helping preserve the life and legacy of her Aunt Harriet through various advocacy efforts. She lobbied for the redesign of the \$20 bill to feature the image of Harriet Tubman. Additionally, she promoted the U.S. Department of Interior's efforts to establish the Harriet Tubman National Historic Park.

Ms. Johnson is an active member of the Thompson Memorial AME Zion Church in Auburn, where she plays piano every Sunday and serves as Choir Director. She is an active member of the Harriet Tubman Booster Club. Through her life's work, Ms. Johnson has demonstrated an unwavering passion for preserving the rich history of her family and our community, creating positive change on the local, state and national levels.

Pauline Copes Johnson was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator John A. DeFrancisco.





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Katie Joyce and Meghan Cavanaugh

*K*atie Joyce and Meghan Cavanaugh co-founded the Buffalo Council of Girls on the Run International in 2010. The organization inspires and empowers young girls to reach their fullest potential while living joyful, healthy and confident lives. Through coaching, mentoring, team building, and – of course – running, girls realize a tangible sense of achievement as well as a framework for setting and accomplishing life goals.

After stints in New York City and Washington, D.C., Ms. Joyce and her husband moved back home to Buffalo to raise their three children. She began looking for ways to give back to her community, and sought out opportunities to use the sport of running to empower girls and young women on a larger, community-wide scale.

Ms. Cavanaugh began running after college. Running soon became a central part of her life, helping her stay healthy, happy and connected with friends and the community that she loves.

During one of their long runs together, Ms. Joyce and Ms. Cavanaugh decided to embark on the journey of bringing Girls on the Run to Buffalo – and they have not looked back since.

As Council Director, Ms. Joyce helps manage all the day-to-day operations, while overseeing new sites and Council growth. As Program Director, Ms. Cavanaugh manages the behind-the-scenes operations of registration and volunteer/coach recruitment. In just seven years, more than 11,000 girls have participated in Buffalo's Girls on the Run program from over 167 schools, in all eight Western New York counties.

As leaders of a not-for-profit organization that firmly believes in providing this remarkable programming to girls in need, both Ms. Joyce and Ms. Cavanaugh have been able to provide free registration and running sneakers to over 5,000 girls, allowing them to know what it is to be a girl on the run!

Katie Joyce and Meghan Cavanaugh were selected as 2017 Women of Distinction by Senator Christopher L. Jacobs.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Elizabeth Lusskin

*E*lizabeth Lusskin is the President of the Long Island City Partnership and Executive Director of the Long Island City Business Improvement District. Her professional life has encompassed public, private and non-profit roles.

Ms. Lusskin served as the Chief of Staff and Vice President of Strategic Initiatives at the Polytechnic Institute of New York University. Prior to her time at New York University, through her consulting practice, Elizabeth Lusskin Consulting LLC, she advised public, private, for-profit and non-profit clients on economic and community development, organizational management and strategic planning.

Previously, Ms. Lusskin served as New York City Department of Small Business Services' Deputy Commissioner for Programs and Development, as well as Counsel of the Alliance for Downtown New York, Inc. and Legislative Counsel in the New York State Office of Federal Affairs in Washington, D.C., under Governor Mario M. Cuomo. She is a graduate of New York University School of Law and Yale University.

In her current role, Ms. Lusskin has made a significant impact on Long Island City. She is a tireless advocate for Long Island City residents and small businesses. Her knowledge and expertise have contributed to transforming this neighborhood into a thriving economic hub and improving the overall quality of life. She is committed and dedicated to investing her energies on Long Island City to ensure it remains a vibrant and welcoming community for everyone.

Elizabeth Lusskin was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Michael N. Gianaris.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Mary Lyall

*M*ary Lyall of Ballston Spa has been a passionate and dedicated advocate for finding missing persons and helping families of missing loved ones for nearly 20 years.

When their daughter, Suzanne Lyall, went missing in 1998, Mary and her late husband, Doug, turned their sadness and quiet desperation into a positive force for change with the creation of the Center for Hope. Center for Hope helps other families find missing loved ones and advocates for state and federal legislation and initiatives to better respond to missing person cases.

In 1999, Mary and Doug helped get the “Suzanne’s Law Campus Safety Act” passed in New York, which requires all colleges in the state to have plans that provide for the investigation of missing students and violent felony offenses committed on campus.

Mr. and Mrs. Lyall’s impassioned advocacy on behalf of their daughter and all families of missing persons got “Suzanne’s Law” passed on the federal level in 2003. Suzanne’s Law requires that police notify the National Crime Information Center when someone between the ages of 18 and 21 is reported missing, and is part of the national Amber Alert law.

Thanks to the strong advocacy of the Lyalls, New York became the first state in the nation to create a Missing Persons Remembrance Monument located next to the State Museum in Albany. New York State also recognizes a Missing Persons Day that brings together family members of missing persons to share ways of coping and to keep hope alive.

In recent years, the Lyalls conceived of the idea of putting the pictures of missing persons on drink coasters with the hope this will generate tips that could solve a cold case. This led to the creation of the “Coasters for Hope” program that has distributed 75,000 drink coasters with pictures and information on missing persons to restaurants and taverns across the Capital Region.

Mary Lyall is a community hero and truly a wonderful person, who with her late husband, Doug, turned their personal tragedy into a mission to ensure that what happened to their family is never experienced by someone else’s family.

Mary Lyall was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator James N. Tedisco.





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Nina Lynch

*N*ina Lynch of Rhinebeck moved to Dutchess County in 1963, and discovered the League of Women Voters and the value of education, collaboration, and thoughtful action for community problem-solving. Her leadership of Friends in Service Helping (FISH) inspired her to use volunteer service to help meet community needs. When FISH services were supplanted by county services, Ms. Lynch shifted focus to help start the Greater Hyde Park Meals on Wheels program, which recently celebrated 40 years of service to its community.

Due to her outstanding reputation as a community volunteer, Ms. Lynch was hired as the Coordinator for the Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers program and eventually by the Dutchess County Office for the Aging. She retired in July 2011, after almost 19 years as the organization's Aging Information Services Specialist. In this role, Ms. Lynch supervised the staff and volunteers responsible for providing outreach as well as benefit and health insurance counseling services. Ms. Lynch served as Chairperson of Dutchess Health 2000's Aging Committee for five years, and served on the boards of directors of Mental Health America, the Dutchess County Community Action Program, the Dutchess County Department of Mental Hygiene, Taconic Resources for Independence and Northern Dutchess Caregivers Coalition.

Ms. Lynch helped inspire and is a founding member and President of Rhinebeck at Home, an aging-in-place membership organization. Launched in 2013 with 35 members, Rhinebeck at Home has grown to 110 members – all committed to an all member/all volunteer approach to neighbors helping neighbors stay independent at home. Rhinebeck at Home initiated a series of public education forums called "Rhinebeck is Aging", in collaboration with Northern Dutchess Hospital and other community partners. The organization also features a showcase of services and resources—Thriving in Rhinebeck—while continuing to provide socialization opportunities, volunteer assistance and resource referrals to its members.

Ms. Lynch is a member of the Town of Rhinebeck Committee on Aging, the Rhinebeck Affordable and Open Space Housing Committee, and the Lifetime Learning Institute at Bard College. She is an active, certified volunteer health insurance counselor for the New York State Health Insurance Information Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP). She holds a B.A. from Elmira College.

Nina Lynch was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Susan Serino.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Ann Marie Maglione

*A*nn Marie Maglione has been a hardworking public servant for many years. As Director of the Orange County Office for the Aging, she oversees a department of over 50 employees and a \$7 million budget. Through Ms. Maglione's vision and leadership, a \$3.5 million centralized kitchen project became a reality, and her office was able to successfully streamline their dining program into a state-of-the-art cook/chill process that currently serves more than 250,000 meals annually.

As a former assistant to the Orange County Executive in the early 2000s, Ms. Maglione left a mark on her community when she worked in collaboration with, and as a liaison to, several of the county human services and health departments.

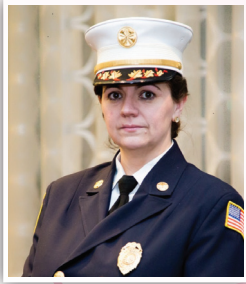
Ms. Maglione also served on the Indian Point response team, planning and implementing programs that helped to improve emergency preparedness for Orange County residents. She has served as a board member for RECAP, NYS Workforce Investment Board, Mount Saint Mary College and the NYS Association on Aging. Ms. Maglione was appointed by Governor Pataki to the Middletown Psychiatric Center's Board of Visitors in 1997, and more recently, by Governor Cuomo to the NYS Commission on National and Community Service.

Currently a member of St. Luke's Hospital Population Health Coalition and the Wallkill East Rotary Club, Ms. Maglione also volunteered with the Mental Health Association Compeer Program. She earned a Bachelor of Science from Empire State College and currently resides in the Town of Montgomery.

Aside from her professional achievements and volunteer services, Ms. Maglione is well-known for her positive and infectious personality, and prides herself in always being able to put a smile on someone's face.

Ann Marie Maglione was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator William J. Larkin, Jr.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Christine Manzi

*C*hristine Manzi had a passion for public service from an early age. In August 1992, at the age of 14, she joined the West Babylon Junior Fire Department. During her years as a Junior Firefighter, she rose through the ranks of Lieutenant and Captain.

In 1995, Mrs. Manzi was inducted into West Babylon's Rendezvous Truck Company No. 4 as a Probationary Firefighter, one of only a few female firefighters at that time. Within her first year, she completed all requirements and was certified as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). She achieved all of these accomplishments during her senior year of high school!

Mrs. Manzi went on to earn two Bachelor's degrees in Education from Dowling College and started working full-time as an elementary school teacher for the West Babylon School District, all while completing mandatory firefighting courses and responding to calls as an active firefighter.

In December 2001, Mrs. Manzi was elected to the rank of Lieutenant – a momentous occasion since a woman had never held that position within the West Babylon Fire Department. After only two years, she was elected Captain.

Since becoming a firefighter, Mrs. Manzi had the unwavering goal of one day becoming Chief. In 2009, she was elected to the position of 3rd Assistant Chief, another "first" in her noteworthy career. Over the next six years, she continued to climb the ranks, serving as 3rd Assistant, 2nd Assistant, and 1st Assistant Chief.

Recognized for her exceptional leadership skills, in December of 2015, Mrs. Manzi was nominated Chief of the West Babylon Fire Department, once again making history as the first woman to hold this rank in the Town of Babylon.

Currently, and in addition to her firefighting duties, Mrs. Manzi continues to teach elementary school at the West Babylon School District and coaches Junior Varsity Field Hockey. She is truly a dedicated member of her community, and her exemplary lifelong achievements detail just how much pride she takes in protecting and giving back to her community. Out of all Mrs. Manzi's accolades and accomplishments, the most important job she has is being a mother to her two young boys, Michael and Wyatt, with her loving husband, John.

Christine Manzi was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Phil Boyle.





Women of
DISTINCTION
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Barbara R. Martinsons

*B*arbara R. Martinsons, through her actions and generosity, is a pillar in her community. Her kindness to the Sullivan County community and the larger region is legendary among those privileged to know her.

A true philanthropist, Ms. Martinsons donated a building and parcel of land in the Town of Liberty to public radio station WJFF to serve as its new home. To support the funding of the Time and the Valleys Museum in Grahamsville, she opened and operated Calliope on Main, a secondhand furniture shop in Livingston Manor, the proceeds of which were donated to the Museum. Ms. Martinsons supports the arts and artists as a collector of sculpture, a sponsor of the Shandalee Music Festival, and as a board member – past and present – of the Catskill Art Society, WJFF and the Shandalee Music Festival.

Through her vision and volunteering Ms. Martinsons fosters social justice. She founded a thriving organization in New York City that supports women after release from prison, and serves as a board member of Hudson Link. Retired from the workforce, she has volunteered for several years as a teacher for Hudson Link in the local prison, helping inmates explore questions of right and wrong and earn credits toward a college degree. Most recently, she participated in Dialogue2Change, an initiative of the Sullivan County Human Rights Commission to develop creative strategies to overcome poverty.

Ms. Martinsons founded and facilitates a women's reading group in Livingston Manor, creating community and comradery among 10 women of diverse ages and backgrounds. She enhances her community through her appreciation for arts and culture, respect for history, fostering of beauty and her generosity to organizations throughout the region.

*Barbara R. Martinsons was selected as a 2017
Woman of Distinction by Senator John J. Bonacic.*





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Paula Miritello

*P*aula Miritello had a chance meeting with an elderly veteran at an Armed Forces Day event and was inspired to establish “My Brother Vinny,” named in honor of her special needs brother. The charitable organization furnishes apartments for formerly homeless veterans.

The veteran told Ms. Miritello he was excited to leave the VA hospital and live on his own, but he had no furniture. She learned that many veterans who leave homeless shelters and find affordable permanent housing can barely cover their expenses. They often move in with just the clothes on their backs, and without amenities like a bed, linens, a kitchen table or chairs.

Ms. Miritello recruited a group of volunteers, and in June 2013, My Brother Vinny assisted its first veteran. Since then, the organization has helped over 420 veterans and plans to reach out to 500 veterans by the end of 2017.

These veterans have a profound sense of pride but welcome the services and care provided by My Brother Vinny. As Ms. Miritello has said, they are not offering a handout; they are offering a hand in friendship and support.

My Brother Vinny is a 100% volunteer organization that serves the Hudson Valley and beyond, engaging volunteers from all ages, ethnicities and community groups, including the Lions Club, local Rotaries and the Girl Scouts.

In addition to assisting United States veterans, My Brother Vinny holds an annual walk to help local animal shelters and rescue groups in support of animal welfare. It coordinates various community events that assist those with emotional, physical and intellectual disabilities, and delivers gifts to over 140 adult home residents and to children attending low income community centers.

Ms. Miritello’s motto of “helping mankind one good deed at a time” is a testament to My Brother Vinny’s continued positive impact on the lives of veterans, others in need, and the volunteers who serve them.

Paula Miritello was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Terrence P. Murphy.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

The Honorable Valerie Brathwaite Nelson

*T*he Honorable Valerie Brathwaite Nelson was appointed by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, Second Department in February 2016, making history as the first African-American female from the County of Queens to be elevated to Associate Justice of the Appellate Division.

Prior to her election as Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York in 2005, Justice Nelson served two years as an elected Judge of the Civil Court of New York. She grew up in Queens and graduated from P.S. 134 in Hollis, the Renaissance Middle School in St. Albans and the Campus Magnet High School in Cambria Heights. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Syracuse University, graduating with honors in only three years. Justice Nelson went on to receive her Juris Doctor degree at George Washington University, was admitted to the bar in New York and later admitted to practice law before the United States Supreme Court as well as various other courts.

Justice Nelson has received a host of honors and recognitions, including the Women of Achievement Pacesetter Award, United States Congressional Award, a New York State Senate Award, New York State Assembly Award, the Queens Borough President's Award and the New York City Council Outstanding Service Award. She has been featured in various articles, and her distinguished record of service has been profiled in the media.

Justice Nelson has been an active participant and leader in various professional and community organizations, including past member of the NYS Continuing Legal Education Board, past first vice-president of the York College Community Advisory Council, past member of Community Board 12 in Queens, a former Girl Scout Troop Leader, former Vice Chancellor, Trustee and member of various boards and committees for the Diocese of Long Island and former warden and member of the vestry of St. Gabriel's Church, Hollis. She is a Silver Star member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and a member of The Links, Inc.

Justice Nelson is grateful for the opportunities that have been provided to her by others, and she is eager to continue to make positive contributions to society. She is married to Nicholas J. Nelson, Ph.D., and they are the proud parents of three children.

***The Honorable Valerie Brathwaite Nelson was selected as
a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Leroy Comrie.***





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Monica Neuwirt

*M*onica Neuwirt is the daughter of two Holocaust survivors. As such, survival and hard work are part of her DNA. When she was diagnosed with breast cancer last year, she decided to put her health in the hands of the Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

Ms. Neuwirt is a longtime supporter of the Institute, having ridden every year in the annual biking fundraiser, The Ride for Roswell, since its inception in 1996. Over the past nine years, she has qualified for the Extra Mile Club, raising over \$1,000 each year. She was also instrumental in inspiring her company, FedEx Trade Networks, to participate in the fundraiser.

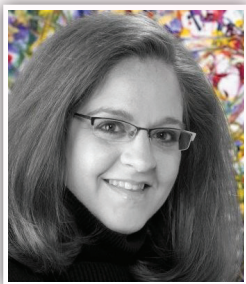
Last year The Ride for Roswell was a difficult time for Ms. Neuwirt. A year earlier, her partner had undergone chemotherapy and cancer surgery at Roswell Park, a good friend had recently died of lung cancer, and Ms. Neuwirt herself was recovering from surgery and in the midst of her 20 radiation treatments. However, despite all of this, she managed to complete her 30-mile bike route for The Ride for Roswell.

Ms. Neuwirt has worked for FedEx Trade Networks for almost 14 years as an IT manager, and has led team members to participate in various fundraisers for charities, including United Way, American Cancer Society, March of Dimes, Hospice Buffalo, the Food Bank and Ronald McDonald House.

Ms. Neuwirt graduated from the University at Buffalo as a Computer Science major, at a time when few women worked in this field. She was one of two women in her graduating class. She went on to get her MBA at Canisius College. A lifelong feminist and human rights activist, she has participated in many events over the years to fight oppression of all kinds. If it were not for the courage of those who fought against the Nazis in WWII, she would not be here today.

Monica Neuwirt was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Timothy Kennedy.





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Jennifer O'Brien

*J*ennifer O'Brien of Greene serves as the Executive Director of Life Is Washable, Inc. (also known as "The Magic Paintbrush Project"), which she founded in 2005. Mrs. O'Brien was inspired to create the program while searching for a way to encourage movement for her two daughters who have cerebral palsy.

Mrs. O'Brien leads her talented team to serve individuals with special needs and their supporting community of caregivers, including family members and service agencies. Since its inception, Life Is Washable, Inc. has served over 45,000 participants in the Southern Tier through its creative family and caregiver engagement programming. Workshops are specifically designed to provide both physical and cognitive activities for those diagnosed with a developmental disability and serve all ages from infants to the geriatric. The Magic Paintbrush Project has the distinction of being the only known family engagement program of this type in the United States.

Mrs. O'Brien has also developed other innovative programs such as "Friendly Access Safety Kits" and "Fair Play" adaptive sports. She continually advocates for the special needs community, developing innovative approaches for them to be included in the larger community. Most recently, Mrs. O'Brien served as project coordinator for the "OurSpace at Rec Park" project. Completed in 2016, the four-acre park project welcomes Southern Tier residents of all ages to a fully accessible play space, which includes an innovative garden, tree house, amphitheater and playground. It is the largest fully accessible playground in the State of New York. OurSpace turned what was once an underused and deteriorating park into a vibrant community space, welcoming thousands of families each year.

In addition to these achievements, Mrs. O'Brien also works full time for Health Processes, Inc. A tireless volunteer, Mrs. O'Brien serves as the Executive Director of the American Special Hockey Association. She also volunteered with Hospice & Palliative Care of Western Colorado (now known as HopeWest) from 1996-2004, and worked for Hospice of Chenango County from 2004-2005. She is most proud of her family, husband Paul, daughters Paige and Maggie and their extended "kids."

Jennifer O'Brien was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Frederick J. Akshar II.





Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Paulette Ofrias

*P*aulette Ofrias has been a tireless advocate, devoting her time and talents to improve her community. She is a business leader, educational advocate and volunteer for many local civic organizations.

A member of the Southold School Board of Education for 14 years, Ms. Ofrias has served as Board President for the past five. She has been instrumental in fostering a successful partnership between the Southold and Greenport school districts, and her efforts have led to the sharing of programs, administrators and sports teams, creating greater opportunities for students and savings for taxpayers. Under Ms. Ofrias' leadership, the Southold-Greenport concept has overcome geographical and social barriers to become a shared services model for the rest of the state.

Ms. Ofrias has been active in the School Athletic Association, the Building and Grounds Committee, and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Southold School Educational Foundation. She has volunteered for St. Patrick's Church CCD religious education and CYO basketball programs, and is the esteemed recipient of the St. Pius Award of Rockville Center for service and commitment.

A member of the Southold Rotary Club, Ms. Ofrias has also supported the work of the Chamber of Commerce. Her efforts on behalf of the Southold Town Annual Fourth of July Parade have made this event an enormous success for residents and business owners on the North Fork. In addition, Ms. Ofrias is a Trustee of the East End Health Plan and serves on the East End Financial Group Advisory Board. In 2014, she was honored by the North Fork Chamber of Commerce with the Business Award on behalf of the Scott Family Pharmacy.

Ms. Ofrias and her husband, Greg, own the Southold and Shelter Island Pharmacies. They are the proud parents of two adult children, Scott, an attorney, and Patrick, a police officer. The Ofrias' outstanding dedication and countless contributions have positively impacted the Southold community and beyond, and have established a remarkable legacy for future generations.

Paulette Ofrias was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Kenneth P. LaValle.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Carlene Pinto

Carlene Pinto is a national organizer and social justice advocate for immigration and criminal justice reform, and is currently the Immigration Campaign Manager for the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), which represents more than 200 organizations across the State of New York.

Ms. Pinto has deep roots in both Brooklyn and Upper Manhattan. She has a passion for social justice and taking action, often challenging the status quo when, even as a young school-aged student, she recognized unfairness around her. Ms. Pinto received her Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and Criminal Justice with a minor in Disaster Relief Psychology from The State University of New York at New Paltz. As an undergraduate, she interned with the Department of Emergency Management, the American Red Cross and the United Way. She is also a member of Mu Sigma Upsilon Sorority, Incorporated, a nationally recognized multicultural sorority focused on diversity, service and empowerment.

Before joining the NYIC, Ms. Pinto worked with Riverside Church as the Coordinator of Mission and Social Justice Programming. There, she provided support to 17 different programs focused on human rights and equality. Ms. Pinto also served as an outreach liaison for the Justice League NYC, a task force under the umbrella organization Gathering for Justice, founded by civil rights leader Harry Belafonte. She has also led and supported hundreds of local and national direct actions and mobilizations, and has helped bring thousands of people together to advocate for social and institutional change. Some of these mobilizations have gained national recognition, including the Climate March, the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington, the #March2Justice, the 20th Anniversary of the Million Man March, the Women's March and #NoBanNoWall.

Ms. Pinto was born in Brooklyn and is the youngest of three. She is the daughter of Carlos, a first generation Cuban immigrant, and Patricia, a third generation Irish Roman Catholic.

As a young professional, Ms. Pinto has already spent a decade organizing and advocating for intersectional campaigns. She is truly a voice for the voiceless.

Carlene Pinto was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Marisol Alcantara.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Amy Pollard

*A*my Pollard, RN, BSN, MPS has dedicated her life and career to helping those in need. It takes a special kind of individual to be a nurse, and Ms. Pollard has taken her duty to a very high level, holding a variety of clinical and leadership positions throughout her nursing and administrative career.

In 2007, Ms. Pollard joined Nicholas H. Noyes Memorial Hospital as Vice President of Patient Services, overseeing nursing and support services. In 2011, at a financially challenging time for the hospital, she was promoted to President/CEO. Empowered by a visionary board, an excellent management team and a loyal staff, Ms. Pollard's fearless leadership oversaw the successful turnaround of Noyes Hospital.

Working with the board and administration, Ms. Pollard has been a driving force in the process of identifying a partner for Noyes, as it develops into an integrated health care system. She guided the hospital through its affiliation with the University of Rochester, helping it become a leader in medical care. Her management has fostered a positive environment, with Noyes and UR Medicine continuing to fulfill its goal of having patients receive care in their community whenever possible.

Among the highlights of Ms. Pollard's tenure is the construction of a new, expanded emergency department that opened in 2014. The facility is three times larger than the former space, affords comfort and privacy for patients, and is equipped with cutting-edge technology. In January 2016, the Ann and Carl Myers Cancer Center opened its doors to provide comprehensive medical and radiation oncology services to patients in Livingston and surrounding counties.

Amy Pollard was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Catharine M. Young.





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Mary K. Pluta

*M*ary K. Pluta was born and raised in Rochester, and has been an active member in the community for many years. The Pluta Family has made an enormous impact in Rochester in their fight against cancer. Established in 1975, the Pluta Cancer Center became New York's first independent not-for-profit cancer center, and in 2012, merged with Strong Hospital and the University of Rochester Medical Center.

Ms. Pluta is a past Board Member of the Center, and has co-founded and co-chaired the Emerald Ball and the Tres Chic Fashion show in an effort to continue to raise funding for the Pluta Cancer Center Foundation. Recognizing that the emotional and unexpected financial costs of cancer can be overwhelming to patients and their families, the Pluta Cancer Center Foundation is able to provide the funds necessary to help meet patients' daily living expenses as well as support by providing various integrative oncology programs. Ms. Pluta and her husband, Ron, are also past co-chairs for the Make-A-Wish Gala.

When her children were younger and attended The St. Louis School, Ms. Pluta co-founded and co-chaired Gaining Assets for Learning Advancement (GALA). This annual fundraiser raises money for the technology program and classroom curriculum at the school. She has also co-chaired McQuaid Jesuit High School's BASH and Our Lady of Mercy High School's Gala.

Ms. Pluta has continued her community involvement by working in various capacities for several professional golf tournaments. She has volunteered and worked the 1980 PGA Championship, the 1989 U.S. Open, the 1998 U.S. Amateur, the 2003 PGA Championship and the 2013 PGA Championship. She also volunteered for the Diocesan Scholarship Golf Classic, which raises funds for inner city elementary schools.

Ms. Pluta continues to be diligent in finding ways to give back to the community she loves. She is currently a board member on the Pluta Cancer Center Foundation and the Wilmot Cancer Institute Advisory Board, and is honorary Co-Chair for the 2017 Scholarship Golf Tournament for St. John Fisher College.

Married for 37 years, Ron and Mary Pluta have three grown children, Andrew, Danny and Catherine. They are expecting their first grandchild this summer.

Mary K. Pluta was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Joseph E. Robach.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Donna Raymond

*D*onna Raymond was born in New York City on September 9, 1948. Her parents, Rose and William Raymond, owned and operated a mom-and-pop candy store. At the age of 12 Ms. Raymond moved to Jackson Heights and has lived there ever since.

In 1968, Ms. Raymond went to work for Pfizer, Inc., retiring in 2001 after 33 years of service. During her tenure at Pfizer, she taught developmentally disabled children on Sundays at Christ the King Elementary School in the Bronx.

Much of Ms. Raymond's volunteer time has been dedicated to raising awareness and funding through walks for AIDS, Alzheimer's disease and breast cancer. She has operated phone banks at Channel 13 during their pledge periods, participated with United Way to paint camps in upstate New York for underprivileged children, and volunteered for Special Olympics.

The residents of Jackson Heights and East Elmhurst know that Ms. Raymond is always available to help. Whether it be for emergencies, getting people to their doctors, snow removal, taking care of their gardens or making sure they fly the American flag, Ms. Raymond is just a phone call away.

In December 1993, Ms. Raymond joined the North Queens Homeowner Civic Association of Jackson Heights, Inc., serving as Board President for 10 years. She is also on the board of the Woodheights Democratic Club.

Throughout the years, Ms. Raymond has participated in back-to-school events, donated school supplies to the needy, removed graffiti from fences in the neighborhood, cleaned and painted. One of Ms. Raymond's lasting contributions to her community was her work to name a street in honor of Emma Brant, a dedicated community activist.

Donna Raymond was selected as a Woman of Distinction by Senator José R. Peralta.





Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Eileen Reilly

Eileen Reilly is a lifelong Queens resident who grew up in Woodside as one of 13 children. For the past 23 years, she has been serving as Executive Director of the Maspeth Town Hall Community Center. Under her leadership, the Center has become an integral and vital part of the community, providing innovative programming that includes quality education, recreation, the arts and health awareness.

As a member of a large family, Ms. Reilly learned the meaning of “community” at an early age. She has used this personal commitment to the greater good as a guiding principle for her exceptional work in the Maspeth community. Since becoming involved with the Town Hall, she has seen the Community Center’s budget increase from \$150,000 to more than \$4.5 million. Today, the group employs 285 people, approximately 85 percent of whom are college students, and serves 500 clients a week.

Among many accomplishments over her tenure, Ms. Reilly oversaw a much needed \$3 million renovation of the Maspeth Town Hall building to improve and expand its ability to serve the community. She developed a toddler program which serves 125 children and parents weekly, and has collaborated with local public schools, private foundations and the New York City Department of Education to provide highly successful Pre-K and after-school programming for local families. In addition, Ms. Reilly works diligently to initiate and maintain valuable partnerships with such entities as the Maspeth Federal Savings Bank, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Maspeth Kiwanis Club.

Apart from her work with the Maspeth Town Hall, Ms. Reilly has served for more than two decades as the St. Adalbert’s Ladies Guild coordinator, and has aided the Guild in raising more than \$200,000 for the school. Her community service has been honored by *Newsday*, the New York City Council, and the Queens Borough President, among others.

Ms. Reilly has been married to her husband, Robert, since May 1970. The couple met when Robert was recovering in the hospital from wounds suffered in the Vietnam War, and Ms. Reilly happened to be volunteering at the facility after work. They are the loving parents of Michael, Amanda and Thomas, and the proud grandparents of Darrah Kate and Sydney Grace Reilly.

Eileen Reilly was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Kay Francis Richards

*K*ay Francis Richards has been a resident of the Village of Mamaroneck since she was three. A tireless advocate for her community, Ms. Richards received a BA and MA from Hunter College in Education, and in her professional life, was a Principal in the New York City School District. Ms. Richards' involvement and advocacy spans many community-based organizations, including the Interfaith Council of Mamaroneck, the Larchmont Mamaroneck Summit and the Mamaroneck Human Rights Committee.

As a member of the Interfaith Council of Mamaroneck, Ms. Richards has helped organize guest speakers to talk about their religious beliefs; her mission is to find commonality and understanding so that people may avoid misconceptions that lead to bigotry and hatred. Ms. Richards has spoken before the Interfaith Council about her beliefs as a Baptist.

As a member of the Larchmont Mamaroneck Summit, Ms. Richards helps to provide a platform for public officials to communicate with their constituency. The Summit works to address issues of importance to Westchester County residents to open up a dialogue with the public officials who represent them.

Ms. Richards' work on the Human Rights Committee of Mamaroneck centers on equity and fairness for all. She is committed to helping save the Mamaroneck School's Co-Op Camp Program, which provides a summer camp experience to children living in the neighborhood and attending the Mamaroneck Avenue School. Ms. Richards, along with other members of the Committee, put in countless hours coordinating the annual Human Rights Committee's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration.

Ms. Richards' long-lasting work on behalf of the Mamaroneck community certainly makes her worthy of being nominated as a Woman of Distinction.

Kay Francis Richards was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator George Latimer.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Christine M. Riordan, Ph.D.

Christine M. Riordan, Ph.D., President of Adelphi University, is an internationally recognized expert in leadership development, team building, diversity and inclusion. She is renowned for her groundbreaking initiatives to personalize and transform the higher education experience. Dr. Riordan is the first woman to serve as president in the history of Adelphi University, an institution more than 120 years old.

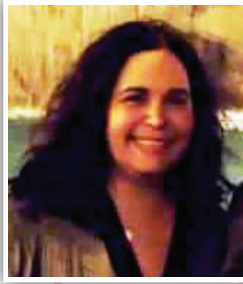
Since her appointment as Adelphi University's 10th president in 2015, Dr. Riordan has demonstrated true leadership, launching a remarkable turnaround strategy that has led to a boost in enrollment, increased fundraising, greater recognition and new strategies to promote student success, diversity and inclusion. This fall, Adelphi enrolled the largest and most diverse freshman class in its history. Adelphi climbed seven places in the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings during the first year of her presidency. In addition, Adelphi has been cited for excellence by *USA Today*, *Forbes* and *Washington Monthly*, and has been named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. Under Dr. Riordan, alumni giving is at an all-time high.

Dr. Riordan has published more than 60 academic and business press articles, is authoring a book on leadership, and is a frequent speaker on leadership and overcoming challenges, including her TEDx talk, "Dare to Be Extraordinary." Dr. Riordan serves on the board of directors of RE/MAX Holdings, Inc. (NYSE:RMAX). She is also on the board of directors of the National Chorale, New York's premier professional choral company, and the Long Island Association, a leading business organization on Long Island. Additionally, she is a member of the Long Island Regional Advisory Council on Higher Education – all while raising two teenagers.

A true advocate for women's issues, Dr. Riordan has placed women in key roles throughout the University. She created the Leadership Fellows Program, where three diverse women faculty members are studying university administration. Dr. Riordan is also a member of the Women's Giving Circle, a pioneering group of women philanthropists.

**Christine M. Riordan, Ph.D. was selected as a 2017
Woman of Distinction by Senator Kemp Hannon.**





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Donna Schaertl

*D*onna Schaertl, the wife of a career military officer, credits the military for teaching her about duty, honor, commitment, sacrifice and resiliency.

Ms. Schaertl collects items to send to deployed service members, organizing send-offs and homecomings for local National Guard and Reserve units, and supporting their families during deployment. She organizes events such as the "Blue Star Canteen" to support local Blue Star Mothers through the Canandaigua VA, and works with the VA Medical Center to support its programs for returning veterans and their families. Ms. Schaertl has planned the Veteran's Day celebration each November at Red Jacket High School and has been instrumental in the Flag Day ceremony each year.

Not long after Ms. Schaertl's son, Jared, was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, he tragically drowned in an unsecured swimming pool at just four years old. This devastating event led Ms. Schaertl to create the Jared Schaertl Memorial Fund and organize Autism Awareness Month events in her local school district. Jared is the inspiration for Ms. Schaertl's commitment to causes that lower the rates of preventable injuries to children.

Ms. Schaertl is a certified car seat technician and volunteer with the Red Jacket Fire Department. She partnered with local law enforcement and the Ontario County Safety Council to create the annual Bike Rodeo and the "Shop With a Cop" program. She has worked to unite local law enforcement agencies with the "Do the Right Thing Ontario County" program, serves as the Executive Event Coordinator for the Police Benevolent Society, and gives her time to support first responders. In addition, she volunteers with Operation Safe Child and worked with Thompson Health to start her own coalition, Safe Kids Finger Lakes.

At the Manchester-Shortsville school district, Ms. Schaertl teaches fire prevention, a Home Alone Safety Program, and internet and personal protection programs. She expanded the Red Ribbon program to the high school and has taken on the issue of distracted and drunk driving with older students. She does all of this while working full-time at the Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES.

Ms. Schaertl says, "These programs and events have helped me to come to terms with the death of my child, and I have been able to work with and meet some of the most amazing people and everyday heroes. If I make a difference in just one child's life, all my time and effort have been worth it."

Donna Schaertl was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Pamela A. Helming.





Women of
DISTINCTION
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Diane Serratore

*D*iane Serratore has worked in the non-profit arena for more than 30 years, starting her career at the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation National Office in 1982. After 14 years of traveling for the March of Dimes from sea to shining sea, Ms. Serratore opted to focus her energies and efforts closer to home, becoming Director of Communications and Fund Development for the Girl Scout Council of Rockland County – a position she held from 1996 to 2006.

In 2006, Ms. Serratore accepted the position of Director of Community Impact for the United Way of Rockland County, and on April 2, 2008, she became the second Executive Director in the history of People to People, Rockland's primary hunger relief organization.

Ms. Serratore is a Nyack native, born in Nyack Hospital. She graduated from St. Ann's School and Nyack High School before earning a Bachelor of Journalism from the University of Missouri School of Journalism ~ the oldest and one of the most prestigious journalism schools in the nation.

Ms. Serratore is a member of the Rockland Business Association, Leadership Rockland Alumni Association, Nanuet Rotary, Morning Music Club and St. Ann's Choir. She is a graduate of Leadership Rockland (Class of 2002) and the Pattern for Progress Fellows Program (Class of 2012). Ms. Serratore received the Girl Scout Pearl Award, the Rockland Business Women's Network "Woman of the Year" Award, the New York State Grand Lodge of Masons DeWitt Clinton Award, the VERITAS Medal Award from Dominican College, the Nyack Center Woman of Leadership and Vision Award, the Venture Foundation Award and the Pattern for Progress Regional Fellows Award.

Diane Serratore was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator David Carlucci.





Women of
DISTINCTION
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Deborah A. Simonsmeier

*D*eborah A. Simonsmeier lived her life with passion and determination. As a young woman, she graduated from Ichabod Crane High School in Valatie and went on to earn a nursing degree from the Columbia Memorial Hospital nursing program. Her selfless service for the rights and welfare of others became her passion.

Ms. Simonsmeier was a lifelong member of the Valatie Rescue Squad. Her father, Charles Pardee, founded the Valatie Rescue Squad and ran the organization from their home. As a teenager, Ms. Simonsmeier would answer emergency calls that came in to the home phone. Her tireless efforts and hard work earned Ms. Simonsmeier the title of Assistant Captain, and she was the first female officer. In addition, she also served as Chairwoman of the Board.

Ms. Simonsmeier served as the Senior EMS instructor at Columbia-Greene Community College. She also served as the Co-coordinator of the Columbia & Greene Co. Stress and Emotional Relief Team. She is remembered by many first responders for mentoring and helping them become who they are today in their careers.

Her accomplishments in EMS were recognized in 1989 when she received the first Annual Person of the Year Award from the Columbia County Emergency Medical Association. In 1990, Governor Mario Cuomo appointed her Columbia County's representative to the Governor's Task Force on Volunteerism. In 2014, the Columbia County Board of Supervisors honored her for her community service.

Through her work as a council member on the Kinderhook Town Board, Ms. Simonsmeier successfully advocated for programs and activities that support at-risk children, senior citizens, active military personnel, veterans and their families, members of law enforcement, and first responders. She was also Director of Constituent Services for Senator Kathleen Marchione in Columbia County.

Regardless of whether she was advocating for senior housing, working with at-risk students, or finding new ways to help our military service members, she did it with tenacity and poise. Ms. Simonsmeier will be long remembered as a true friend to all, dedicated to her family and her community, and for making the world a better place in which to live.

***Deborah A. Simonsmeier is being honored
posthumously as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by
Senator Kathy Marchione.***





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Mary Stanco

*M*ary Stanco is a lifelong Glen Cove resident and is the Sales Manager for Laffey Fine Homes Real Estate. An active member of the community, she has had the opportunity to work with civic officials and members of this multi-cultural business community. This has given Ms. Stanco valuable experience dealing with a complex international marketplace.

Outgoing and involved in local community efforts, Ms. Stanco has been an advocate on behalf of the homeless and those in need of personal items like food, clothing and household items.

Ms. Stanco's reach in Glen Cove is widely known. She is a member of Glen Cove National Nite Out planning committee, the City of Glen Cove's "Senior Day" at Village Square and the planning committee, and has served as President, 1st Vice President and Executive Board Member of the Glen Cove Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Stanco's commitment does not discriminate. She is active in all types of organizations, including AARP of Glen Cove, Glen Cove Deasy School, Habitat for Humanity, Children's Miracle Network, the Glen Cove Senior Center, Youth Exchange Committee, St. Patrick's Church, Glen Cove Cares, Ronald McDonald House, The Diabetes Foundation, Long Island Alzheimer's Foundation, Dress for Success, the Food Pantry Glen Cove and Rotary International. She was named the Police Benevolent Association Person of the Year 2015 and was the 2008 LIBOR Sprit Award Recipient.

Ms. Stanco is a graduate of Briarcliff College, where she earned a BA in Business Administration and Marketing.

Mary Stanco was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Carl L. Marcellino.





Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

The Honorable Betty E. Staton

*B*etty E. Staton's career included almost 20 years on the Kings County Family Court bench before returning to the Bedford Stuyvesant Community Legal Services Corporation (BSCLS) where she began her legal career in 1979. She is currently President of Brooklyn Legal Services (BLS), an organization that has provided free legal services to poor and low-income Brooklyn residents for 50 years.

Judge Staton graduated from New York University School of Law, and worked at BSCLS for eight years, including several years as Deputy Director and Director of Community Outreach and Education. In March 1987, she became a founding partner in Boyd Staton & Cave, the first African American female law firm in New York. She was an instructor at several colleges, including New York City College of Technology, where she taught Business Law for more than 15 years.

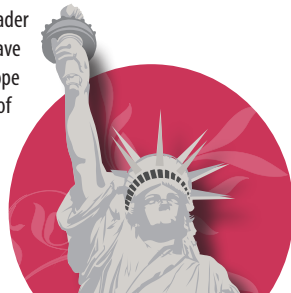
In April 1991, former Mayor David N. Dinkins appointed Judge Staton to a 10-year term on the New York State Family Court, assigned to Kings County. She was reappointed in 2001 by former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and served until her mandatory retirement in 2004. After retirement, Judge Staton served as a Judicial Hearing Officer until her resignation in July 2011, and served as Project Director of BSCLS until August 2012.

Judge Staton belongs to several bar associations, legal and community organizations, including Black Child Development Institute, Age Friendly Advisory Board, Volunteer Lawyers Project Advisory Board, NYS Bar Association and NBA Judicial Council. She has been a panelist and presenter at various events and she has also appeared as a guest on television.

Judge Staton has two sons, four grandchildren and three great grandchildren. She loves to dance and is the 2013 winner of the Stars of New York Dance, a New York City dance competition that provides scholarships for aspiring young dancers.

A servant leader at the Emmanuel Baptist Church and a worship leader for the Prime Time Senior ministry, Judge Staton feels blessed to have served her community throughout her legal career. Her greatest hope is that her work and daily life reflect the highest recommendation of God's love for us.

The Honorable Betty E. Staton was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Velmanette Montgomery.





Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Charlene Jackson Thompson, Esq.

*C*harlene Jackson Thompson is an attorney, social engineer, community activist, entrepreneur and most importantly, a mother to her three children. A graduate of the College of William and Mary and Howard University School of Law, Ms. Thompson has spent the last 20 years practicing law in New York State and working to bring social, political and economic justice to the most underserved communities.

In 2011, Ms. Thompson founded her firm - Thompson Economic Development Services, LLC ("TEDS"). The firm provides comprehensive consulting services to municipalities, developers, institutional, academic, public, private and nonprofit organizations that manage housing, business, economic and community development projects.

Ms. Thompson currently serves as Chair of the Minority/Women Business Enterprise Committee for the Long Island African American Chamber of Commerce (LIAACC), and is also on the Board of Directors of the Nassau County Bar Association. Through LIAACC, she works to provide certification, capacity building workshops, and government contracting opportunities on behalf of minority, women and economically disadvantaged business owners.

Ms. Thompson is also Of Counsel to the Law Firm of Comrie & Coward located in Freeport, Long Island. Her practice areas of expertise include real estate, wills, trusts and estate planning as well as comprehensive business services.

Ms. Thompson resides in Baldwin with her three children, Justina, Trevor and Jada.

*Charlene Jackson Thompson, Esq. was selected as a
2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator John E. Brooks.*





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Linda Ventura

*L*inda Ventura of Kings Park was unexpectedly and tragically drawn into the war against drugs and addiction when she lost her son, Thomas, to an overdose in 2012. Instead of allowing this loss to define her as a victim, Ms. Ventura was motivated to turn her tragedy into hope by working to help other New York families battling the heroin and opioid crisis.

To that end, Ms. Ventura established Thomas' Hope Foundation to help fight for the lives of other young people and empower parents to help their loved ones. The Foundation is dedicated to promoting the awareness and prevention of drug addiction and to achieving victory for those individuals seeking sobriety through education, advocacy, research and treatment.

Ms. Ventura has been a staunch advocate on behalf of families and communities. Her work has brought much-needed attention to this terrible epidemic and helped countless people understand the human suffering caused by drug abuse.

In addition to her efforts with Thomas' Hope Foundation, Ms. Ventura selflessly gives her time and talent to Families in Support of Treatment (F.I.S.T.), St. Joseph's Treatment Facility, the Nassau County Heroin Task Force and the Leadership Council within the Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency.

Ms. Ventura has been honored for her efforts by the Caron Foundation, the Long Island Recovery Association and with the Sober St. Patrick's Day Spirit Award.

Ms. Ventura is the proud mother of Andrew, a student at Farmingdale State College, and Jennifer, who is married and has three beautiful children. Andrew and Jennifer provide their mother with constant support and honor the memory of their brother through their personal involvement at Thomas' Hope Foundation.

Linda Ventura was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator John J. Flanagan.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Ellen White

*E*llen White is a community leader, entrepreneur, mom and amazing resource for children with developmental disabilities on the South Shore. With dedication, compassion and humor, Ms. White has created inclusive and fun communities for all, and is a role model to many.

Ms. White is the creative force behind South Side High School's successful Centre Stage Program, which pairs special education and general-education students to perform an entertaining show each year. Since its founding, Ms. White has helped write, direct and produce the all-inclusive play, which has grown to a cast of over 100 students who perform for almost 2,000 people, and has become a popular collaborative community.

It was through Ms. White's experience with Centre Stage that BackYard Players & Friends (BYP & Friends) was born. As students graduate, many experience a decline in their social interactions and community involvement. Ms. White, along with her sisters, Joan Kelly and Christine Daly, co-founded BYP & Friends - an inclusive, arts based program designed to enhance the social and interpersonal skills for teens and young adults.

Ms. White is currently building an outdoor creative play space called "Mary's BackYard," pulling together different community groups to design and build a beautiful, interactive space that will include elements of music, art, science, literature and theatre. The goal of "Mary's BackYard" is to create positive and meaningful experiences for the community at large, as inclusion inspires people to work together and learn from each other.

Ms. White's credentials do not end with wildly popular arts programs. Ms. White, whose sons all played lacrosse, has also served as President of Rockville Centre Lacrosse and founded the girls lacrosse program.

Ms. White has lived in Rockville Centre for more than 20 years and is married to Chris White. They have four sons: Tim, Christopher, Ryan, and Terence.

Ellen White was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Todd Kaminsky.





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Nadine Whitted

*N*adine Whitted is the recently retired District Manager of Brooklyn's Community Board 4, a post she held for 30 years. A dedicated and driven community advocate, Ms. Whitted was active with Community Board 4 for a total of 40 years.

Born in Brooklyn, Ms. Whitted demonstrated early on the leadership qualities that would later earn her an award for Outstanding Service to her Bushwick High School Graduating Class of 1972, and mark the beginning of her love of service, delivery and labor on the behalf of others.

Upon graduating from Brooklyn College with a degree in Education, Ms. Whitted applied for a position at Brooklyn Community Board 4. She accepted the position of Administrative Aide approximately three days prior to the Black Out of July 1977.

Under the leadership and the tutelage of then-District Manager John Dereszewski, Ms. Whitted was encouraged and inspired to serve her Bushwick community. She quickly set out to cure the many social ills Community Board 4 residents were confronting, including property owner abandonment, lack of public and affordable housing, the drug epidemic, inferior infrastructure, illiteracy, and rampant unemployment.

Recognizing her compassion, patience, humility and understanding, Ms. Whitted was soon elevated to the position of Assistant District Manager, and immediately set out to work harder and advocate with greater passion and persistence for the residents of Community Board 4.

After much consideration and prompting by many community board members and local leaders, Ms. Whitted assumed the role of Community Board 4 District Manager in 1986, a position she held and served with respect and great distinction until her retirement in November 2016.

Nadine Whitted was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Martin Malavé Dilan.





Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Randa Williams

*R*anda Williams exemplifies the true spirit of America as a business executive, citizen and dedicated servant to her community.

In the early 1980s, Ms. Williams applied to a local volunteer fire department, but her application was denied because of her gender. She sued the town, village and three fire clubs to allow women to serve as firefighters, and her case became national news. Ms. Williams ultimately prevailed, and her efforts paved the way for other women firefighters.

Ms. Williams has been involved in Girl Scouts for over five decades. During that time, she has shared the value of community service with thousands of girls. She has participated in every aspect of scouting, from Assistant Den Mother to Day Camp Director and Cookie Manager. The Genesee Valley Girl Scouts has recognized her hard work with the Great Scout Award, Green Angel Award, Achievement Award and Honor Award. Ms. Williams is thrilled to be involved and participate with her granddaughter's troop.

In every aspect of her life, Ms. Williams' focus is to serve her community. In the past 10 years, she has rescued many horses from slaughter, and currently owns and cares for five horses that she has saved. She has also served as lead speaker at the Take Back the Night program at SUNY Brockport.

From 1982 to 1995, Ms. Williams owned and operated Sams Auto Parts; she is current owner of MHL Performance, a speed parts company in the Town of Bergen. She received a Bachelor of Science degree from State University of New York Empire and a Master's degree from SUNY Brockport. She has four children – Trisa, Emma, Thomas, and James – and 14 grandchildren.

Randa Williams was selected as a 2017 Woman of Distinction by Senator Michael H. Ranzenhofer.





Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Michelle M. Deal Winfield

*M*ichelle M. Deal Winfield, known to friends and community members as “Shelley,” is a compassionate civic leader who has devoted her career and personal life to strengthening programs that help children learn and flourish.

Ms. Winfield dedicated the majority of her career to the New York City public schools, spending 15 years as the Supervisor of Special Education at Robert Wagner Middle School in Manhattan. She also volunteered for 27 years with the National Dance Institute and spent three years as Vice President of the Sophie Gerson Healthy Youth Foundation, a leading organization that provides children with free after-school activities and summer camps. Throughout her career, Ms. Winfield has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to children, fighting to ensure children’s access to music, dance and athletic activities. She has rooted herself in the belief that all children should be treated with respect.

Known for her infectious smile and genuine warmth, Ms. Winfield has selflessly devoted herself to helping others and bolstering support for vital local institutions. Recently, Ms. Winfield led an effort to celebrate the centennial of the Children’s Court in Manhattan. She spearheaded the street co-naming of East 22nd Street with “Children’s Court,” to honor the work of judges, social workers, doctors, court officers and other personnel who support our youth.

Ms. Winfield has received a number of prestigious recognitions, including the NAACP Distinguished Service Award, the New York City Health + Hospitals Marjorie Matthews Award for activism, and the Samuel J. Tilden Democratic Club Humanitarian Award. She is recognized by community leaders for her selfless devotion to community service and her tireless advocacy for underserved groups.

Ms. Winfield earned her undergraduate degree in home economics from Howard University and two Masters’ Degrees from Fordham University in Educational Administration and from Adelphi University in Special Education.

Ms. Winfield and her husband, Claude, have been married since 1974. They are the proud parents of two children, Marie and Michael, their son-in-law Konrad Pust, and are loving grandparents to Sophie and Koemi.

***Michelle M. Deal Winfield was selected as a 2017
Woman of Distinction by Senator Brad Hoylman.***





Women of **DISTINCTION** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Ana Rodriguez Zurutuza

*A*na Rodriguez Zurutuza was born to the late Mr. and Mrs. Jose and Juana Rodriguez in Guayama, Puerto Rico, before moving to the Bronx. She is one of 10 children.

Ms. Zurutuza married the late Bernardino Zurutuza in 1968 in St. Bridget's Church in New York City. Together, they had four children, and Ms. Zurutuza is the very proud grandmother of four and great-grandmother of two! She worked as a cashier for 23 years and has been a dedicated member of Holy Cross Church for 49 years.

At Holy Cross Church, Ms. Zurutuza and her late husband started the church choir and the Good Friday Possession. She has also served as a Eucharistic Minister, Cursillista "De Colores," Sagrado Corazon and serves her community by visiting the sick in their home and hospitals. She volunteered for six years at St. Vincent De Paul and is well known for her Hispanic cuisine.

Ms. Zurutuza has been a member of the New York Hispanic Choir for 33 years and counting, and is a strong advocate for homeowners in her community. She dedicates her free time to helping her community stay informed, and is often sought after when people need any kind of assistance.

No matter the situation or need, Ms. Zurutuza approaches it with enthusiasm and professionalism. She is, undoubtedly, a hard working go-getter with a heart of gold!

*Ana Rodriguez Zurutuza was selected as a 2017
Woman of Distinction by Senator Ruben Diaz, Sr.*





Previous Honorees 1998

Belinda Alvarez-Groneman
Mary Anderson
Lois Andrascik
Chris Bailey
Susan Barbash
Geri Barish
Joan Barkley
Sister Mairead Barrett
Jeanine Bondi-Steinman
Susan K. Brustmann
Marie Burghard
Joan Cashon
Carol Cassell
Sister Dolores Castellano
Charlotte Conable
Carol L. Constantino
Margaret Dadd
Jane D'Amico
Aline Euler
Ilene Flaum
Mary Jane Fox
Janice W. Gay
Eileen Gentilcore
Gloria Richardson Griffin
Jane Hamburger
Elizabeth Harvey
Patricia A. Hickey
Pamela C. Johnston
Loretta Jones
Katherine E. Keough

Natsue Kobayashi
Joy Levy
Barbara A. Manwaring
Nancy Mariano
Margaret McCaughey
Carmen Montanez
Dianne Sackett Nannery
Sr. George Aquin O'Connor
Lorraine Pace
Mary Jane Pauling
Mary Anne Pietrzykowski
Jeanie D. Roberts
Marie A. Russo
Theresa Santmann
Christine Conniff Sheahan
Jean Sherlock
Muriel Siebert
Beverly Sills
Laura Spalter
Leontina Stern
Maria A. Thomson
Stephanie Edith VanAuken
Mary Ann Varvaro
Janet Walsh
Frederica Warner
Charlotte Watson
Elaine Wick
Patricia Willsea
Doris Buckley Wolf



Previous Honorees 1999

Nan Ackerman
Eileen "Tally" Almquist
Jean Argetsinger
Juanita Lorraine Bass
Dorothy "Dot" Bavaro
Sabina Rosemary Cardali
Mary Ann Carey
Maureen Clancy
Sheila Cohen
Gayle Cratty
Ava Dorfman
Nancy Duff
Barbara Edwardsen
Josie Fernandez
Geri Fessler
Jo Ann Fiorentino
Carolyn Fish
Connell Frazer
Betty Slavicek Gastelua
Regina Keller Gil
Jane Golub
Kathleen Granchelli
Sister Audrey Harsen, O.P.
Eileen McKenna Hickey
Roni Horowitz
Donna DiSunno Iorio
Joan Johnson
Vicki Joshpe
Frances "Mickie" Kayne
Dr. Christine G. Khanna
Naima Kradjian
Nina Larrabee

Dr. Linda Leest
Joan Hope MacNaughton
Margaret Magnus
Takako J. Michii
Deborah Naybor
Chloe Ann R. O'Neil
Elizabeth Osborne
Francis McMillan Parks
Donna deLuca Periconi
Irene M. Prazak
Dorothy Reister
Anne Reyen
Ann Marie Rossi
Deborah Running
Carolyn Rush
Lisa Marsh Ryerson
Sandy Scaccia
Mildred Scharf-Ehrenfeld
Therese Schoeneck
Charlotte Smallwood-Cook
Shari Hall Smith
Frances Sodrick
Geraldine Spinella
Sheila Strassburg
Alana Sweeny
Terry Troia
Mary Kathleen Tucker
Betty Cooper Wallerstein
Lynn Westbrook
Patricia Hill Williams
Joanne Wisor
Carolyn Wittreich



Previous Honorees 2000

Laura Ahearn	Melissa Lahtinen-Penfield
Joie Anderson	Thelma P. Lally
Betty Angelino	Louise Levine
Lillian Barbash	Marlene Markoe-Boyd
Sarah Jane Bernhardt-Clifford	Eleanor McDonald
Judith S. Bloch	Karen Joy Miller
Patricia Brown	Marian Mullet, R. N.
Melina Carnicelli	Anne Paolucci
Tammy Carnrike	Madeline Patterson
Jacqueline Carway	Tillie Peck
Sister Marie R. Castagnaro, S.S. J.	Elizabeth Potts
Donna Chittenden	Frances Pratt
Nellie Coakley	Captain Priscilla "Chris"
Dr. Mary DeRose	Ramirez-Lynch
Tamara Denysenko	Gertrude Rieur
Carol Sue Detweiler	Jean Robbins
Lynda Distler	Wilma Rogalin
Noel Donohue	Lynn Rosen
Eve Fertig	Sharon Saunders
Sister M. Bethany Fitzgerald	Lisa Savyon
Angela Forte	Joan Schumaker
Florence B. Fuller	Paula Sharf
Geraldine Futrell	Linnea Shaver
Ruth Finnegan Garner	Claire Shulman
Norma Gorman	Arlene Sitterly
Barbara Hadel	Mary Jane Smith
Joy Hansen	Dawn Sullivan
Lucille Helfat	Alyson Sweetser
Nikki Henkin	Cathryn Thomas
Sister Elizabeth Hill, C.S. J.	Amy Torrey
Anne Humphrey	The Honorable Sandra L. Townes
Ann Irvin	Ellen Tuohey
Lisa Israel	Kathy Urschel
Arlene Johnston	Joanne VanZandt
Barbara Kearns	Georgia Verdier
Clara B. Kellner	Reba White Williams
Helen Kelly	Delores Cooper Kershaw



Previous Honorees 2001

Crystal A. Abers	Dottie MacVean
A. Trudy Adell	Lucinda Sloan Mallen
Heather Ross Benedict	Susan Marino, RN
Phyllis Besch	Sister Theresa Martel
Dr. Helen Illick Breed	Rev. Colette Matthews
Margaret "Mugsie" Burch	Claire McIntee
Buhrmaster (Coolman)	Carol Naylor
Margaret Buzzell	Angie Miller
Elizabeth "Betty" Cochrane	Gertrude Hess Parker
Lucy F. Codella	Ann Petrus
Dr. Vivian Cody	Frances Pizzola
Barbara Cohen	Wendy Powers
Wendy Csoka	Annie Rabbitt
Victoria DeVantier	Chandler M. Ralph
Patricia C. Donnelly	Victoria Rosenberg
Pat Finnerty	Helene Donlan Sacco
Amy Fischetti	Irene Scheid
Miriam M. E. Garcia	Roberta C. Schofield
Sister Rose Vincent Gleason	Carol Silva
Dr. Lois Goldsmith	Bobbi Smith
Betsy Harrison	Cathy Stewart
Susan Helsinger	Vivian Street
Pat Hieronymus	Dolores Thompson
Doris Hunter	Dr. Mary Ridgway Tinker
Deborah S. Johnson	Belina Venuti
Jacqueline Keller	Dr. Nora Volkow
Abby Kenigsberg	Nancy Wackstein
Renee Krieger	Ethel L. Walker
Carole LaPlante	Shirley Waters
Margaret A. Leahy	Jill Way
Patricia Lindi Linekin	Harriet Weber
Catherine Linfoot	Sister Martha Winum, D.W.
Hon. Gaetan B. Lozito	



Previous Honorees 2002

Kathleen Barton
Debbie Basile
Nancy Bernheim, Esq.
Marilyn Bitterman
Patricia Bodnar
Andrea Clark Brown
Prudence Carabine
Margaret Carroll
Fredrika Conway
Judy Dagostino
Margaret Requa DeFrancisco
Rita DiMartino
Kathryn R. Doolittle
Anne DuPrey
Laura Elliot-Engel
Peg Ellsworth
Madeleine Fitzgibbon
Marguerite Flood
Maude Frank
Michelle Fratti
Dr. Anne DuVal Frost
Mimi Galgano
Roberta Giordano
Carol Gresser
Rosemary Gunning
Mary Pat Hancock
Dr. Debra Handel
Dr. Ruby Elinor Hare
Violet Haufsk
Dr. Evelyn Blöse Holman
Donna A. Holt
Mary Ellen Jones
Patricia Knapp

Angela Koenig
Lorraine Krup
Mary Anne Krupsak
Ursula LaMotte
Gloria Lettow
Carol Mahoney
Nancy Manfredonia
Marlene Marciniak
Doreen Marks
Ligia Mendoza
Mary Holt Moore
Nancy Naples
Rosemary Nesbitt
Theresa Pagano
Eve Pawelski
Judith Peckham
Dr. Jana Pulkrabek
Dr. Greta Rainsford
Jean Raymond
Zakia Robana
Jill Rooney
Dr. Stella Pandell Russell
Janice L. Schaefer
Joanne Shenandoah
Susan Sherwood
Rachel Spivey
Dr. Susan Swain
Barbara Wilcox Thuesen
Linda Laursen Toscano
Fanny Villarreal de Canavan
Sister Vincent Marie Wilson
Elizabeth L. Young



Previous Honorees 2003

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