



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

# Hinchey Honors Bread Alone Bakery with Senate Empire Award for Business Excellence

[Michelle Hinchey](#)

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**LAKE KATRINE, NY** – Senator Michelle Hinchey recently presented the New York State Senate Empire Business Award to Bread Alone Bakery CEO Nels Leader and COO and co-founder Sharon Burns-Leader for their outstanding efforts – along with co-founder Daniel Leader – in guiding a family-owned bakery into its second generation while leading with the values of sustainability, equitable food access, and social justice. The Empire Award was created by the New York State Senate to recognize business excellence. Recipients are often leaders in their field who make significant contributions to the growth, prosperity, and betterment of the communities they serve.

“Bread Alone is a business that leads by example, using baking not only to share good, healthy food but also as a means to take pioneering action against the Climate Crisis and promote equity,” **said Senator Michelle Hinchey.** “For forty years, Bread Alone has walked the walk, pledging to leave the world better than they found it and succeeding in making an impact — from becoming the first net-zero, carbon-neutral bakery in the country to creating employment opportunities that provide justice-impacted individuals a second chance at a better life. It’s a privilege to bestow Bread Alone with the State Senate’s highest honor for our business community — the Empire Award — in recognition of the Leader family’s exceptional commitment to turning their craft into a trailblazing business that is setting the standard for sustainability, equity, and social responsibility in the Hudson Valley and beyond.”

**Bread Alone CEO Nels Leader said,** "Senator Hinchey and her team do the work the right way, for the right reasons. They lead with optimism, resilience, and deep commitment to everyone in the district. We're honored to be recognized by Senator Hinchey for our efforts to do our work the right way, too, feeding our community simple, honest food and taking care of the team that does the work."

**Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger said,** “Bread Alone Bakery is a perfect choice for this prestigious award, and I want to thank Senator Hinchey for recognizing this exemplary Ulster County business. Bread Alone Bakery is a prime example of a home-grown company that has demonstrated that businesses can lead with values and achieve great heights in business success. Congratulations to the Leader family, CEO Nels Leader, COO Sharon Burns-Leader, and founder Dan Leader, and to the company's more than 200 employees!”

**Olive Town Supervisor Jim Sofranko said,** “Forty years ago, Bread Alone opened their first bakery in the Town of Olive, and today they continue to provide delicious bakery products, and good jobs as well as ongoing support to our local civic organizations. We are fortunate to have such good neighbors in our town.”

**Woodstock Town Supervisor Bill McKenna said,** “I congratulate Bread Alone for being awarded this honor by Senator Hinchey. I cannot think of a more deserving business. Bread Alone is a shining example of how businesses should be run. They care for their employees, our community, and our environment.”

In 1983, European-trained chef Daniel Leader moved his family to the Catskill Mountains to pursue his dream of opening a bakery centered on time-honored, artisan-style organic bread. His aspiration was clear — to bring this authentic craft to his home and community.

From its very first loaf in 1983 to the present day, sustainability has been built into the fabric of the business. This commitment is evident across all areas of Bread Alone’s operation: sourcing organic grains locally to support the Hudson Valley and Catskills business economy and undertaking major climate goals to reduce waste, conserve energy, and fight the Climate Crisis.

The Leader family has embarked on a remarkable journey to bridge heritage baking methods that draw inspiration from traditions around the world with climate-forward, cutting-edge, sustainable technology. In 2018, Bread Alone opened the country’s first-ever carbon-neutral bakery in Boiceville, reaching net-zero status through clean electric appliances, solar power, and efficient heating. The bakery generates power solely from the sun – utilizing both roof and ground mounts installed within an existing leach field – and scrap wood from its wood-fired brick ovens. At Bread Alone’s Kingston HQ, at least 30% of the bakery’s energy needs are met by the sun, thanks to a 196 KW solar array atop its roof. Across all of its operations, the business has pledged to source 100% of its energy from renewable sources no later than 2030.

Social justice also forms a central component of Bread Alone’s mission, which is reflected in the company’s strong conviction to uphold a living wage for team members and ensure that opportunities are actively extended to historically marginalized community members, including formerly incarcerated and justice-

impacted individuals.

Bread Alone Bakery lives by the motto 'Break Bread, Make Peace,' embodying a strong dedication to bringing people together and doing what's right for the community and the world at large. With nearly four decades of history behind it, guided by this principle, Bread Alone has extended its influence beyond baking outstanding bread, actively contributing to the betterment of the Hudson Valley and Catskills and the planet.

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