



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Honors Community Leader from Yorktown to Commemorate Women's History Month

PETE HARCKHAM April 1, 2025

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Sen. Harckham with honoree Jen Ritz

Peekskill, NY – In honor of Women's History Month, New York State Senator Pete Harckham recognized Jen Ritz, owner of Sweet Tees Custom Apparel in Yorktown, during a special ceremony at the Senator's District Office in Peekskill.

"It is vital that we recognize the significant contributions of women in our local community and reflect on the legacy of women throughout New York's history and the substantial ways they have helped shape our state identity," said Harckham. "I am grateful for the work Jen Ritz has done in our community to uplift others and give back. On behalf of the New York State Senate and the residents of the 40th Senate District, I offer my sincere thanks to her for making a difference in so many lives."

During the ceremony, Ritz received two prestigious awards: a New York State Commendation Award, recognizing her significant impact on the local community, and a New York State Empire Award, acknowledging her philanthropic efforts through her business, Sweet Tees Custom Apparel.

Ritz, a graduate of Lakeland High School, attended Iona University, where she played four years of Division I basketball after finishing her high school career as Lakeland's all-time leading scorer.

After graduating, she served as an assistant women's basketball coach at Dominican and Concordia colleges. Ritz also worked for eight years as a physical education teacher at St. John the Baptist School in Yonkers.

In 2013, Ritz co-founded Jason's Army in honor of her friend Jason Needle to raise funds for Make-A-Wish Hudson Valley. The organization has raised over \$100,000 to date, granting eight wishes for local children. This initiative also marked the beginning of Sweet Tees, as Ritz purchased the first screen printing equipment to produce t-shirts for fundraising events.

Sweet Tees Custom Apparel, founded by Ritz in 2015, operates out of her home in Yorktown Heights and offers custom apparel for schools, sports teams, businesses, and organizations

throughout the Hudson Valley and beyond. Through its innovative approach of hosting free online stores for clients, Sweet Tees raised more than \$14,000 in 2024 for local schools, teams, and charitable causes.

“The Hudson Valley has supported me through every chapter of my life,” said Ritz. “To be able to run my business here and give back to those same communities is everything. Thanks so much to Senator Harckham and his staff for the recognition.”

Women’s History Month is an annual celebration of the achievements and contributions of women throughout history. Spanning the entire month of March, it honors the impact women have had across all aspects of society and highlights their ongoing influence in shaping the world.