



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

Senator George Borrello Presents NYS Senate Empire Award to Vertical Café in Honor of 10-Year Anniversary

GEORGE M. BORRELLO July 9, 2025

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WARSAW, NY - In honor of its 10th anniversary, Senator George Borrello presented the prestigious New York State Senate Empire Award to the owners of the Vertical Café, a beloved local business that has become a cornerstone of the Warsaw community. The ceremony, held at the café's welcoming downtown location, celebrated not only a decade of entrepreneurial success but also the café's deep and lasting contributions to community building, youth development, and local revitalization.

“Vertical Café is everything a community-focused business should be,” said Senator Borrello. “For ten years, it has served as a gathering place, a job creator, and a source of inspiration for Warsaw and beyond. I’m proud to present the Empire Award in recognition of Rodd Proefrock’s vision, leadership, and unwavering commitment to uplifting those around him.”

Founded in 2015 in Perry, NY, and relocated to Warsaw in 2017, Vertical Café has become a local institution. Under the leadership of Rodd Proefrock, the café reflects the values of hard work, faith, and family. Alongside his wife and children, Rodd has built a business where customers are treated like family and young people are given meaningful opportunities to learn and grow.

Vertical Café’s impact extends well beyond coffee. In 2021, Rodd spearheaded the transformation of a long-neglected alley behind the café into the vibrant “Alley in the Valley”—a public gathering space that now serves as a symbol of community restoration and revitalization. With support from volunteers and local contractors, what was once filled with trash has become a welcoming place to relax, connect, and enjoy live music, art, and conversation.

Rodd also launched the *Vertical Café Podcast* to highlight local voices making a difference, and he instituted a quarterly Hospitality Award to recognize team members who go above and beyond to serve the café’s patrons with excellence.

“Congratulations to Rodd Proefrock, his family, and the entire team at Vertical Cafe on their 10-year anniversary. We sincerely congratulate them on receiving the prestigious NYS Senate Empire Award presented by Senator Borrello,” **said Scott Gardner, President of the Wyoming County Chamber and Tourism office.** “This honor recognizes Vertical Cafe as an outstanding small business, for their longevity and their continued commitment to our community. We are so glad that they continue to provide quality food and beverages, gifts and a unique

gathering space for customers and visitors.”

"It's an honor and humbling to receive this award as it confirms that we are doing what God has called us to do within our community," **said Vertical Café's owner, Rodd Proefrock.**

"As we mark a decade of Vertical Café, we're not just celebrating a successful small business," Senator Borrello added. "We're honoring a family's commitment to making Warsaw stronger, kinder, and more connected."

The New York State Senate Empire Award is one of the highest honors the Senate can bestow on small businesses, given to those that have shown excellence in both enterprise and community impact.