

2011-J1051

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commending St. Francis College upon the occasion of its 50th annual Charter Award Dinner on April 14, 2011 and honoring Charter Award recipient Michael "Buzzy" O'Keeffe

WHEREAS, The State of New York is renowned for its centuries-old tradition of excellence and diversity in education and for the place of paramount importance which education holds for the people of the State; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize institutions of commitment and high achievement whose purpose and endeavor are dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in education, and to the development of responsible citizens and community leaders; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern and fully in accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to recognize and commend St. Francis College, Brooklyn, New York, upon the occasion of its 50th annual Charter Award Dinner on April 14, 2011 and to honor Michael "Buzzy" O'Keeffe, an inspiring member of the community and an esteemed recipient of a 2011 Charter Award; and

WHEREAS, The distinguished Charter Award recognizes the preeminent service of its recipients to the betterment of the lives of citizens throughout the New York City metropolitan area; and

WHEREAS, Michael "Buzzy" O'Keeffe was born and raised in New York City; soon after graduating college and serving in the United States Army, he began his efforts to build a restaurant on the waterfront, which would combine three of his avocations, building, food, and being by the water; after 12 years of negotiation with the City of New York, he was given approval to create the city's first waterfront restaurant and The River Cafe, located on the Brooklyn side of the East River, immediately by the Brooklyn Bridge, opened in June 1977; during his 12 year waiting period, he built and operated eight other restaurants; and

WHEREAS, The River Cafe received the Parks Council Award in 1978, the Municipal Arts Society Award in 1979, and was selected by Gault Millau, the French culinary guide, as one of the five best restaurants in New York; the restaurant was also awarded the prestigious "Ivy Award of Distinction" from RESTAURANTS & INSTITUTIONS magazine and was awarded a star in the 2009 Michelin guide; and

WHEREAS, The success of The River Cafe inspired the city to propose a similar development on the Manhattan waterfront; The Water Club, located on the East River at 30th Street, opened in 1982, and currently ranks among the top-grossing restaurants in the United States, and has, along with The River Cafe, received the Distinguished Restaurants of North America Award and has been named to the Restaurant Hall of Fame; and WHEREAS, Michael O'Keeffe designed, built, and for 18 years, operated the Cafe at Grand Central on the Vanderbilt Avenue Balcony of Grand Central station; with the renovation of Grand Central Terminal, the Cafe had to close and Michael O'Keeffe chose to move to Pershing Square at 42nd Street and Park Avenue rather than return to the terminal itself; and

WHEREAS, It was yet another extreme challenge to build in this vast New York City Landmark, which is located under a roadway, over a railway, and surrounded by major thoroughfares; the restaurant, Pershing Square Cafe, received the Municipal Arts Society's 1999 Preservation Award, an award established to recognize outstanding examples of building restoration in New York City's five boroughs; only one award is presented each year; and

WHEREAS, In addition to creating numerous establishments over the past 35 years, he has served as a consultant for many New York City restaurants and has been invited to speak about his innovative waterfront

architectural designs for the 23rd Street Development Project at the International Symposium on Ocean Space Utilization held at Nihon University in Japan; and

WHEREAS, Michael O'Keeffe has served on the Board of Directors of the Fire Safety Foundation, the Harbor Foundation of New York and New Jersey and Fordham Preparatory School; he is also a member of the Cardinal's Committee of The Laity, the New York State Restaurant Association and the Manhattan Waterfront Alliance; and

WHEREAS, Michael O'Keeffe currently serves on the Board of Directors of Audobon New York, the University of Limerick in Ireland, and Futures in Education, which was established to ensure the continuance of the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Brooklyn/Queens by providing scholarships and program support to the neediest of students and schools; and

WHEREAS, The extraordinary performance and remarkable dedication of Michael "Buzzy" O'Keeffe truly merit the prestigious St. Francis College Charter Award and the esteem, respect, and appreciation of this Legislative Body and the people of the City and State of New York; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend St. Francis College upon the occasion of its 50th annual Charter Award Dinner on April 14, 2011, and to honor Michael "Buzzy" O'Keeffe, esteemed recipient of a 2011 Charter Award; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to St. Francis College and to Michael "Buzzy" O'Keeffe.