



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William T. Stachowski

## **Senator Stachowski Honors Local Woman at Statewide Event**

[William T. Stachowski](#)

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**Sister Marcella Garus Selected as 2009 "Woman of Distinction"**

Senator William Stachowski (D-C, Lake View) today honored Sister Marcella Marie Garus of Cheektowaga, NY at a special ceremony in the state capital as the New York State Senate's 2009 "Woman of Distinction."

Sister Marcella was honored for her outstanding work as the President of Villa Maria College in Cheektowaga and for her incredible community service throughout Erie County.

The "Women of Distinction" program was created as part of the Senate's celebration of Women's History Month. It honors exceptional achievement, personal excellence and outstanding, courageous, and heroic actions on the part of individual women from across the state. Each honoree's photograph and biography has become part of a special exhibit proclaiming her unique contribution.

"There are remarkable women in our midst whose lives, work, or special accomplishments contribute to making our communities better, our families stronger, our world more enriched, and serve as outstanding examples to others," said Senator Stachowski. "The Senate's 'Women of Distinction' program provides a great opportunity to honor these women for their achievements and to thank them for the special pride they bring to our communities. Sister Marcella Garus is one of these special women who truly deserves this honor and I'm just so pleased that her work and her accomplishments have been recognized in this way."

Sister Marcella Marie Garus has dedicated her professional life to the field of education serving as President of Villa Maria College in Buffalo since 1978. Under her leadership, enrollment has increased and the college has transitioned from a two-year commuter school to a baccalaureate granting institution. Several of her countless accomplishments include a major revitalization of the interior of the forty-seven-year-old structure; formulating agreements with two leading institutions in Poland to create an international studies program for exchange students; and helping to develop Collegiate Village, an intercollegiate housing project for students attending local colleges.

Sister Marcella Marie became a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix in 1961. She holds an MBA and has taught Business and Finance at area high schools and colleges. In addition to steering the course of Villa Maria College, Sister

Marcella Marie is a tireless volunteer in the community. She has been a trustee of St. Francis Hospital, the Erie County Ethics Committee, the Polish American Festival Committee and is the founding member of the Cheektowaga Historical Museum. She is a member of the Walden Avenue/Pine Hill Neighborhood Preservation Steering Committee, the North American Provinces Think Tank and the Immaculate Heart of Mary Province Villa Maria Complex Study Committee.

Sister is also member of many professional organizations including the Professional Business Women's Association, the Western New York Consortium for Higher Education, the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, and the American Association of Higher Education.

Over the years, Sister Marcella has received many awards including the Governor's Award for Excellence in Education, the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities Higher Education Leadership Award, the Am-Pol Eagle Citizen of the Year Award, and the Cheektowaga Chamber of Commerce Appreciation Award.

A natural leader, Sister Marcella Marie Garus 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.

Also joining Sister Marcella and Senator Stachowski were Ms. Kathy Ives, Sister Marcella's sister, Ms. Mary Robinson, Director of Grants at Villa Maria College and Sister Mary DeAngelis Nowak, VP for Business Affairs at Villa Maria College, who made the trip to Albany to help honor Sister Marcella.

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