



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

Syracuse Resident Mary Nelson is NY Senate “WOMAN OF DISTINCTION”

DAVID J. VALESKY May 24, 2011

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State Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) named Mary Nelson, of Syracuse, as the 49th Senate District’s “Woman of Distinction” as part of the New York State Senate’s 14th Annual 2011 Women of Distinction celebration.

“Mary Nelson’s commitment to her community, especially for children in need, is truly remarkable,” Senator Valesky said. “Her continuing efforts deserve recognition, and I am pleased to honor her as a Woman of Distinction.”

Nelson has a long history of contributing to her community. She launched the Youth Day Barbecue in 2002, which provides free school supplies and backpacks, along with a barbecue dinner, to families in need in Syracuse. As many as 16,000 people have attended the barbecue, held in August each year.

In 2009, Nelson opened a Youth Center on Syracuse's South Side to provide young people and families an positive environment to receive tutoring, or to participate in recreation programs and computer classes.

"When I opened The Mary Nelson Youth Center, my focus was, and continues to be service to the youth of my Syracuse community, so they will develop a love of learning and take their education seriously," Nelson said. "When someone like Senator David Valesky takes notice, and recognizes that work, it empowers me, and fuels my determination."

In addition to her civic activities, Nelson works at Upstate Medical University in the Radiology Department. She and her husband, Robert have seven children and are legal guardians to seven additional children.

Nelson will be recognized at a ceremony in Albany today (May 24), along with other honorees from across the state.

The Senate's "Woman of Distinction" program was created in 1998 to honor New York women who exemplify personal excellence, or whose professional achievements or acts of courage, selflessness, integrity or perseverance serve as an example to all New Yorkers. Past recipients have included City of Syracuse Mayor Stephanie Miner and Onondaga County Executive Joanne Mahoney.

Since the inception of the program, more than 400 women have been honored as Women of Distinction. Nominees have included women from the worlds of business, academia and civic life, as well as those who have performed heroic or selfless acts, made significant discoveries, or excelled against difficult odds.