



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

# Honoring New York's Notable Women

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## Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

What started as a small-town school event in California held over the course of a week in 1978, Women's History Month has grown tremendously. Today, throughout the entire month of March, the world's focus turns to women and the significant contributions they have made to our history, culture and society. In recognition of Women's History Month, the New York State Senate has developed its "Women of Distinction" program which celebrates females from the Empire State.

This year, three women have been added to the Senate's Historic Women of Distinction exhibit, including an individual with ties to Central New York. Mother Marianne Cope, O.S.F. was a German-born American and a member of the Sisters of Saint Francis in Syracuse, New York. Known for her charitable works and compassion, she spent much of her life caring for lepers in the Hawaiian Islands. Despite her close contact with those who had the disease, Cope was never afflicted by it—considered by many to be a miracle in itself. In 2005, Cope was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI and in 2012, she was declared a saint. Mother Marianne Cope now joins the ranks of other remarkable women who are being celebrated through the Women of Distinction program, including Ella Fitzgerald, Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, Estee Lauder, Harriett Tubman and many others.

In addition to celebrating the contributions of great women from our past, the program also recognizes women who are making their mark today. If you know an amazing woman living in Oswego, Jefferson or St. Lawrence County, I encourage you to nominate her for the New York State Senate's Women of Distinction program. You can do so by [clicking here](#) or by calling (315) 782-3418. Nominations must be received by April 1<sup>st</sup>. All nominees will be invited to a local recognition ceremony to be held on May 1<sup>st</sup> and one individual from each State Senate district will be selected to travel to the Capitol to be honored at a special reception on May 13th.

Last year, 17 women from Central and Northern New York were nominated for the program. Of the nominees, Rhonda Lyn Roethel of St. Lawrence County was selected as the 48th Senate District's "Woman of Distinction," and became the 19th person recognized through the Senate program from the 48th Senate District.

Each and every day, women across our state—and our world—are doing amazing things. Throughout the years I have had the opportunity to recognize dozens of them through the New York State Senate's Women of Distinction program. If you know a woman who is truly exceptional I hope you'll take the time to nominate her for this special honor.