



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Our Seniors Make Great Showing

JAMES L. SEWARD May 6, 2010

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I was recently afforded the great honor of meeting with a number of senior citizens from the 51st senatorial district who were visiting the Capitol to take part in the annual “New York State Senior Citizens’ Day Celebration.”

This year’s event entitled, “Livable New York,” focused on the volunteer activities of our older New Yorkers, and suffice it to say there are some amazing accomplishments that deserve recognition. Senior citizens have a wealth of knowledge and experience to offer and it is

exciting to learn of the many ways they are employing their talents. These caring, giving individuals are the lifeblood of the many community organizations that make upstate New York a unique and special place to live.

A number of well deserving senior citizens from the 51st senatorial district were among those honored in Albany including:

- Cortland County - Jim & Pat VanNortwick, Cortland. The VanNortwicks volunteer as a team at their church, on Red Cross blood drives, library drives and the summer feeding program for children at local parks;
- Greene County – Phyliss Beechert, Greenville. Phyliss has worked with multiple emergency services organizations and is the president and life member of the Greenville Volunteer Fire Company Ladies Auxilliary. She has also worked with the Greenville Area Food Pantry, the American Cancer Society and assisted in transporting those in need to medical appointments;
- Greene County – Richard Golden, Athens. Richard is the creator of the Coxsackie-Athens Rotary Club Handyman Program; he also helps coordinate the Coxsackie and Athens food pantries, and is a tri-athlete in his spare time;
- Otsego County – Gerald Green, Unadilla. Gerald has been the driving force behind Unadilla Neighborhood Apartments, a senior housing complex scheduled for completion this summer. He is treasurer of the Unatego High School Booster Club, a village trustee, and vice president of the Otsego County Office for the Aging Advisory Council;
- Otsego County – Lester Olmstead, Richfield Springs. Les has been an active member of the Richfield Springs Fire Department since 1948 and a member of their emergency services since 1973. Still active, he responds to nearly 200 calls a year. Les is also an active member of Rotary and organizes a senior citizens' Christmas dinner;
- Schoharie County – Donald Klob, Cobleskill. Donald is a retired pastor who continues to conduct services in Ulster County and also ministers to both adult homes in Schoharie

County as well as local hospitals. He has served as a long-term care ombudsman volunteer since 2006 and also spends time transporting senior citizens to medical appointments;

- Tompkins County – Carina Emerson, Groton. Carina has served as a member of the Groton American Legion Auxiliary for over forty years. She recently received Tompkins County's 2010 "Outstanding Contribution by a Senior Citizen" award;
- Tompkins County – Paul McGraw, Ithaca. Paul has volunteered as a driver and trainer at Gadabout, a non-profit transportation service for older adults, since 1993. In the past ten years alone, Paul has volunteered over 5,000 hours at Gadabout and as a member of the RSVP Advisory Council. He recently received Tompkins County's 2010 "Senior Citizen of the Year" award.

May is Older Americans Month, a tradition dating back to 1963 to honor the legacies and on-going contributions of older Americans and support them as they enter the next stage in life. This year's theme - "Age Strong! Live Long!" – recognizes the diversity and vitality of older Americans. The diversity was certainly on display in Albany during the recent "New York State Senior Citizens' Day Celebration," and is also on display locally each and every day.

I applaud the many senior citizen organizations at work in our community, and the wonderful seniors who continue to make lasting contributions. I invite everyone, young or old, to visit a local senior center and take part in one of the many memorable activities offered.