

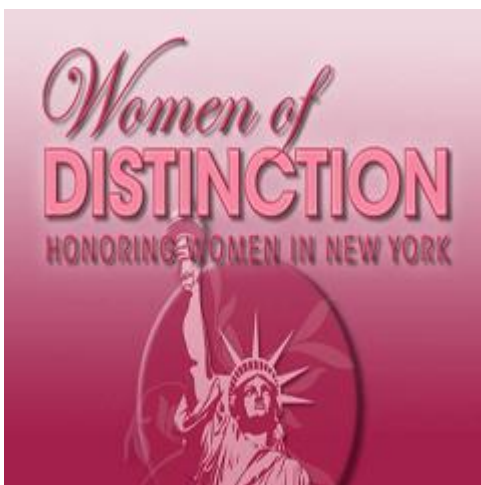


NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kenneth P. LaValle

Nicole Behrens

KENNETH P. LAVALLE May 23, 2011



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## **Award:** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Nicole Behrens overcame the traumatic challenges of an abusive marriage to become a financial advisor and later an advocate for women. It is this last characteristic, being a victim and survivor of brutal and recurring violence in her house, that does not define Ms. Behrens, but that has propelled her to give back to the community with passion and inspiration in a series of unique ways.

For years, Ms. Behrens has generously volunteered her time regularly with The Retreat, eastern Long Island's only domestic violence shelter. She has served as a board member; helping to boost fundraising strategies and activities, as the Treasurer; making sure that The Retreat is fiscally sound and can continue serving the community, and as a gifted speaker and writer who has inspired other women to lift themselves and their children from the grips of domestic violence. Ms. Behrens has shared her difficult story with others...to inspire life-changing action.

A native of Port Washington, Ms. Behrens earned a degree in finance. Since 1989 she has excelled in her field; she began as an assistant, then rose through years of focused work and dedicated service to become a Certified Financial Manager and an Assistant Vice President at Merrill Lynch. Ms. Behrens's spirit persevered; she achieved many of her life's milestones while enduring and suffering nearly indescribable conditions at home. She escaped the violence and went on to help the community in ways that honored and leveraged her personal journey, her story, her professional financial skills, and her passion for helping others. She continues to have an immeasurable impact on others.

Ms. Behrens now shares regularly with today's many suffering women the revelation she had after 10 years of abuse: "You don't need to live like this anymore, and this is not how people treat each other."

Nicole Behrens is a mother, wife, certified financial planner, Assistant Vice President at Merrill Lynch, avid motorcyclist and kayaker, resident of Long Island's East End – and a domestic violence survivor.