



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Actress Annette Funicello of Utica honored as NY Historic Woman of Distinction

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO March 16, 2016

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In celebration of Women's History Month, State Senator Joseph Griffo announced that Utica-born actress Annette Funicello has been recognized by the New York State Senate as a Historic Woman of Distinction.

Born in Utica on Oct. 22, 1942, Ms. Funicello was just 12 years old when her performing talents were discovered by Walt Disney in California. She quickly kicked-off her acting and singing

career as one of the original “Mouseketeers” on the Mickey Mouse Club, and then went on to star in various movies throughout the late 50s and 60s, including “The Shaggy Dog” and the “Beach Party” series.

Ms. Funicello later produced several commercials as a spokesperson for Skippy Peanut Butter. By the late 1980s, Ms. Funicello was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and became the most famous spokesperson to raise awareness of the disease. By 1993, she opened the Annette Funicello Fund for Neurological Disorders at the California Community Foundation with the mission of funding research into the cause, treatment and cure of multiple sclerosis, as well as other neurological diseases. At 70 years old, Ms. Funicello died on April 8, 2013, from complications related to her disease.

“Annette Funicello has always made Utica and the Mohawk Valley proud with all that she has been able to achieve in her life, from making us smile and laugh on the big screen to inspiring us with her dedication on behalf of those living with debilitating disease,” said Senator Griffo, R-Rome. “With an engaging, joyful smile, Annette lived her life to the fullest through personal challenges and accomplishments, and I am proud to join New York State in honoring Ms. Funicello as a Woman of Distinction.”

Ms. Funicello will be featured all this month in an exhibit at the Legislative Office Building in Albany that honors historic New York women whose achievements in arts, science, government, military, labor, education and social reform has earned them recognition as Women of Distinction.

In addition to Ms. Funicello, the exhibit will include two other new honorees: trailblazing attorney and Judge Jane Bolin (1908-2007) of Poughkeepsie and New York City, and surgeon and legislator Dr. Elizabeth Gillette (1874-1965) of Schenectady.

Ms. Funicello, Judge Bolin and Dr. Gillette were all also recognized in a Senate resolution passed March 6 that honored New York's Historic Women of Distinction.

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