



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

## Senator DeFrancisco Recognizes His 2016 Woman of Distinction Honoree

SENATOR DEFRANCISCO HONORS RUTH J. COLVIN

May 12, 2016

ISSUE:

- [Women](#)



Senator John A. DeFrancisco has named Ruth Johnson Colvin, a Syracuse resident and literacy pioneer, as his 2016 New York State Senate Woman of Distinction. Ms. Colvin will be honored at a special awards ceremony in Hearing Room B of the Legislative Office Building in Albany, starting at 5:30 this evening.

Ruth Colvin is a native of Chicago, Illinois, who moved to Syracuse in 1940. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Syracuse University in 1959. In 1961, after learning that more than 11,000 adults in the Syracuse community were “functionally illiterate,” Ms. Colvin started working with professional reading specialists to develop tutor training and instructional materials. In 1962, she founded Literacy Volunteers, which is now known as LiteracyCNY. This non-profit organization has and continues to provide adults in the Central New York community with the literacy tools they need to learn English.

Under the leadership of Ruth Colvin, the literacy volunteer movement quickly spread across the United States, and the national organization, Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc., was incorporated in 1972. Ruth and her husband, Robert, also spent more than 50 years traveling the world together to provide literacy training in more than 60 countries at the invitation of ministries, governments and universities.

“Ruth Colvin has demonstrated an unwavering passion for helping others advance their skills and a strong will and vision to create positive change on the state, national and global levels,” said Senator DeFrancisco. “Through her dedicated work as the founder of LiteracyCNY, Ruth has helped shape the lives of countless individuals.”

Ruth Colvin continues to remain active as a volunteer tutor and life member of the LiteracyCNY board of directors. Ms. Colvin has also started literacy programs in Madagascar and Papua, New Guinea. In 2010, the Ruth J. Colvin Center was created and named after her, aimed at increasing the abilities of Central New Yorkers with limited literacy skills - especially displaced workers, seniors and refugees.

In 1987, Ruth Colvin was given the highest award for volunteerism in the United States, the President's Volunteer Action Award. In 1993, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame, and in 2006, she received the prestigious Presidential Medal of Freedom. She has also published several works, such as *Off the Beaten Path: Stories of People Around the World* (2011).

In her personal time, Ruth Colvin enjoys spending time with her two adult children, six grandchildren and six great grandchildren. She reads and exercises every day, and still enjoys playing 18 holes of golf, when she can, at almost 100 years young!

“I am extremely pleased to call Ruth Colvin a Central New York resident and to honor her as my 2016 New York State Woman of Distinction,” concluded Senator DeFrancisco.

The New York State Senate launched the Women of Distinction program in 1998 to recognize the many contributions of female New Yorkers. Each honoree will be recognized at tonight’s ceremony, and her photograph and biography will be displayed in an exhibit proclaiming the special contributions of the New York State Senate Woman of Distinction honorees.

#####