



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

# **Shannon Ozzella Honored by Senator Young as a Woman Of Distinction**

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BELMONT – Shannon Ozzella, Crime Victims Coordinator for the Allegany County District Attorney’s Office, was recognized as a 2018 New York State Senate Woman of Distinction for her 20-year career helping victims of crime Friday by Senator Catharine Young, (R, C, I – 57<sup>th</sup> District).

More than 30 of Ms. Ozzella’s colleagues, friends and family members gathered in the Allegany County Public Safety Building for the ceremony.

“Shannon Ozzella has devoted her life to making sure victims of crime, especially children, have the support they need as they seek justice through the court system,” Senator Young said. “Shannon does this emotionally punishing work with incredible patience, compassion and empathy.

“She is a hero to the crime victims she has helped and many remain in touch with her years after their cases are resolved. Shannon exemplifies the ideals the Woman of Distinction Award was created to honor.”

Established in 1998, the New York State Senate Women of Distinction Award pays tribute to women who have demonstrated remarkable character, initiative, and commitment in serving their neighbors, strengthening our communities, and acting as role models.

At the beginning of her career, Ms. Ozzella was assigned the case of Cherish Johnson. Ms. Johnson, 15 years old at the time, was sexually assaulted by a male

relative.

Ms. Johnson said even though that was almost 20 years ago, she remains in contact with Ms. Ozzella and considers her a friend and mentor. She said she believes Ms. Ozzella saved her life and empowered her to face her abuser in court.

“Shannon was one of those that helped me to find my voice to face my step-uncle in court and to read a poem that I had written about him at his sentencing,” Ms. Johnson said. “Shannon has helped me to leave that scared, scarred, timid, insecure girl behind and grow into a strong survivor.”

Assemblyman Joseph Giglio, (R, C, I - 148<sup>th</sup> District) said as a former criminal justice official, he knows how difficult it can be to navigate the legal system. “Shannon’s expert guidance has helped thousands of victims throughout her 20 years of service as Crime Victims Coordinator for the Allegany County District Attorney’s Office,” he said. “It has been my distinct pleasure to know Shannon personally and professionally and I extend my congratulations to her on being named a New York State Senate Woman of Distinction.”

Ms. Ozzella helped create the Southern Tier Child Advocacy Center (STCAC) in Olean in 2007 and a satellite center in Wellsville in 2010. The center provides services to child victims of abuse and neglect.

STCAC Director Karen Hill said Ms. Ozzella is unwavering in her commitment to the children and families she helps.

“Her passion to help victims of crime is inspiring,” Ms. Hill said. “I am proud and honored to call her a colleague and to work with her in this mission. This recognition is well-deserved and a true testament to all her efforts.”

Allegany County District Attorney Keith Slep said Ms. Ozzella is an integral part of his office.

“Many of the things we are able to accomplish would not have been possible without her,” he said. “Shannon has always been a caring and enthusiastic advocate for victims. She has a genuine empathy and forms a lasting connection with them. Many victims remain in contact with her even years after their cases have been adjudicated.”

Sheriff Rick Whitney said Ms. Ozzella has shielded victims from further trauma by guiding them through the legal process.

“Shannon serves an integral part of our law enforcement team, by supporting victims and helping them go through the entire legal process without experiencing further trauma,” he said.

Ms. Ozzella said she is honored to be recognized by Senator Young.

“Senator Young has always supported crime victims. Anytime we have asked her for help for victims, she has been there for us,” Ms. Ozzella said. “I think this whole community is blessed to be represented by Senator Young.

Ms. Ozzella began her career as a rape crisis counselor for Community Action in 1998. In 2000, she joined the Allegany County District Attorney’s Office as Crime Victims Coordinator.

As Crime Victims Coordinator, she meets with victims and explains the criminal justice process, preparing them for testifying before grand juries and a trial. She assists victims with victim impact statements; writes orders of protection; speaks on behalf of victims at sentencing, assists with restitution orders; notifies victims when perpetrators are released from prison and makes sure victims receive counseling services when needed.

“For two decades, Shannon Ozzella has been an advocate for crime victims, helping them recover and rebuild their lives,” Senator Young said. “She deserves our deepest admiration and respect for her tireless efforts on behalf of crime victims. She truly is a Woman of Distinction.”