

2019-J1196

Senate Resolution No. 1196

BY: Senator BRESLIN

HONORING Joe and Deb Riitano upon the occasion of
their designation as recipients of the Pillars of
the Community Award by the Sidney Albert Albany
Jewish Community Center

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to acknowledge
outstanding individuals whose professional lives, personal endeavors,
and community service are an example and inspiration to their
colleagues, friends, family, and community; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its
long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to honor
Joe and Deb Riitano upon the occasion of their designation as recipients
of the Pillars of the Community Award by the Sidney Albert Albany Jewish
Community Center to be celebrated on Sunday, April 28, 2019, at
Congregation Beth Emeth, Albany, New York; and

WHEREAS, Each year, this prestigious awards ceremony recognizes
individuals for their contributions to the Center and the Jewish
community-at-large by acting as moral pillars and dispensers of wisdom
and advice, providing continued service and leadership, and acting
generously in the spirit of Tzedakah; and

WHEREAS, Widely known for their extraordinary dedication to Israel

and the local community, Joe and Deb Riitano's philanthropic and leadership endeavors continue to inspire all of those who are lucky enough to know them; and

WHEREAS, Joe Riitano was born in Calabria, Italy, and emigrated to the United States, settling in Schenectady, New York, in 1967; and

WHEREAS, During this time, although he had already been to college in his native country, Joe Riitano signed himself into Mont Pleasant High School to learn English; he went on to graduate with an associate's degree from Hudson Valley Community College; and

WHEREAS, As an entrepreneur, Joe Riitano opened his first business, a gas station, and was the sole mechanic; he opened a second station in 1974, during which time he met Deb through a mutual friend; he was also the sole proprietor of Riitano Auto Parts until 1986; and

WHEREAS, A graduate of The College of Saint Rose with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Education and a Master of Science degree in Educational Psychology, Deb Riitano worked for a short time as a Business teacher at Draper High School; and

WHEREAS, Joe and Deb Riitano have been active members of the Albany Jewish Community Center for many years with their children attending its nursery school; furthermore, Deb was always a serious student of the Holocaust, and Judaism became an intellectual pursuit; and

WHEREAS, With a steadfast and unwavering commitment to her community, Deb Riitano is the former Human Services Director of the Town

of Rotterdam, Coordinator of the Albany NNORC initiative lead by Jewish Family Services, and Executive Director of The Capital Area Council of

Churches; she is currently serving as the Commissioner of Aging for Albany County; and

WHEREAS, Deb Riitano continues to be active in interfaith activities and is the Chair of the Sidney and Beatrice Albert Interfaith Lecture Series at The College of Saint Rose; and

WHEREAS, Today, Deb and Joe Riitano operate Joe's Mobil and New Mont Pleasant Bakery, a kosher and Pas Yisroel bakery in Schenectady; they continue to advocate for many political and social justice issues; and

WHEREAS, Truly committed to their Roman Catholic faith, Joe and Deb Riitano are members of St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church, Voorheesville, and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Schenectady; and

WHEREAS, The proud recipients of numerous awards and accolades, Deb has been honored by both the Jewish and Muslim communities, most recently with the Woman of Achievement Award at the Muslim Women's Gala; Joe received the first Vaad Ha'Kashruth Award; and

WHEREAS, With them throughout have been their six children, Jenny, Kate, Gina, Amanda, Joe Jr. and Josh, three sons-in-law, Peter, Brendan and Michael, as well as four grandchildren, Wills, Lulu, Natalie and Sebastian, who have all shown them love and support and rejoice in their many achievements; and

WHEREAS, Rare indeed is the impressive dedication shown by individuals for the benefit of others which Joe and Deb Riitano have displayed throughout their lives; and

WHEREAS, It has always been the objective of this Legislative Body to honor and support those individuals who have displayed their

commitment to the betterment of their communities, and it is the intent of this Legislative Body to inscribe upon its records, this tribute to Joe and Deb Riitano, that future generations may know and appreciate their admirable character, their many benevolent deeds, and their respect and esteem in which they are held by their peers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor Joe and Deb Riitano upon the occasion of their designation as recipients of the Pillars of the Community Award by the Sidney Albert Albany Jewish Community Center; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Joe and Deb Riitano.