



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of February 20, 2023 -- 'Senate will honor 'Women of Distinction' for 26th consecutive year'

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 21, 2023

| ISSUE: **WOMEN OF DISTINCTION**



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Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and

policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, "Senate will honor 'Women of Distinction' for 26th consecutive year"

It's hard to believe that it has been more than a quarter century since the New York State Senate conducted its inaugural "Women of Distinction" tribute, yet 2023 marks the twenty-sixth consecutive year of the program.

Through the program, state senators annually select an honoree from our respective legislative districts. I am currently accepting nominations for this year's tribute to honor a local woman making outstanding contributions to her local community or the region at large.

It's a meaningful recognition. I look forward to this annual opportunity to express our collective gratitude to an outstanding area citizen from within the 58th Senate District I represent. The 58th District now encompasses all of Chemung, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga and Yates counties, and part of Allegany County (the towns of Alfred, Almond, Amity, Andover, Birdsall, Burns, Grove, Independence, Scio, Ward, Wellsville, and Willing).

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To give you a better sense of who we seek to honor, past "Women of Distinction" honorees from my legislative district have included:

> Carol Berry of Hornell, a longstanding regional library professional and director of the Dormann Library in Bath;

> Virginia "Ginny" Houseknecht of Watkins Glen, a longtime area Cornell Cooperative Extension educator and leader, and founder of the Southern Tier Parkinson's Disease Support Group;

> Beverly "Bev" Stamp, co-owner and operator of Lakewood Vineyards in Watkins Glen, a long-time and beloved ambassador of New York State's nationally and internationally renowned wine and grape industry;

> Lauren R. Snyder, a public health professional from Penn Yan who served as the Yates County Public Health Director for 28 years before retiring in 2009;

- > Linda Thomas, owner and operator of the Wellsburg Diner and recipient of a prestigious “Small Business Excellence Award” from the U.S. Small Business Administration;
- > Dawn R. Smith, Transition and Care Management (TCM) Program Manager at the Bath VA Medical Center and a well-known local veteran advocate;
- > Carmella Hoffmann, Owner and Operator of Sunset View Creamery in Odessa (Schuyler County);
- > Kathryn J. Boor, a native of Chemung County and the Ronald P. Lynch Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) at Cornell University;
- > Pauline “Polly” Holbrook, a longtime stalwart of civic affairs in the city of Hornell and the Canisteo Valley; and
- > Natasha Thompson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier.

As you can see, it’s a long and impressive list of women who have made difference-making and enduring contributions to the quality and strength of area communities. Looking back over the years and all these prior honorees, it reaffirms my pride and privilege in having had this chance to say thank you.

A complementary piece of the Senate’s annual program, which coincides with Women’s History Month celebrated in March, is to recognize women who have made particularly noteworthy contributions throughout New York State’s history in the arts, sciences, government, military, labor, education, and social reform. Our Senate district has been fortunate to have two local women selected for inclusion in the Senate’s historical “Women of Distinction” lineup. Specifically, our annual historical exhibit features the career and life of astronaut and Elmira native Eileen M. Collins, who was inducted in 2007, and Susan E. Hall, who was raised in Tompkins County and is recognized as one of the first women in New York State to be accepted as a nurse in the Civil War. I was proud to sponsor Susan Hall’s induction in 2011.

Local nominations for the 2023 “Women of Distinction” program can be submitted online on my Senate website [HERE](#).

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