

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



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Senator Helming and Assemblywoman Byrnes Announce Honorees for Women's History Month



(Local Livingston County residents, Ellen Bennett, and Dr. Fernanda Astiz, honored at the State Capitol)

To commemorate Women's History Month, members of the New York State Legislative Women's Caucus each selected an honoree from their district. The Legislative Women's Caucus is a bipartisan group that is comprised of members of the New York State Senate and Assembly. Honorees were selected based on their embodiment of this year's National theme - "Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion".

Senator Pam Helming (54th Senate District) chose Ellen Bennett, a longtime volunteer at Special Olympics New York, as her honoree. Ellen, a Livonia resident, has been involved with Special Olympics for over 15 years and is a certified coach for both swimming and alpine skiing. She also recently started a bowling program for athletes.

Betsy Mihm, Director of Program for the Genesee Region of Special Olympics, says "Ellen Bennett is an amazing advocate for the Special Olympics movement. Her contagious energy and enthusiasm light up any room she enters! She is consistently looking to expand opportunities and grow the network in both

school and community programs. She has laid the foundation for several new training clubs and programs in the Genesee Region throughout the past few years.”

Senator Helming added “Ellen Bennett is someone who goes above and beyond to make New York State more inclusive for people with intellectual disabilities. She is a dedicated coach to athletes and a mentor for those who volunteer alongside her. Through her volunteerism, Ellen makes sure that no athlete is left behind. She is a shining example of compassion, dedication, and all that’s good in the human spirit.”

Assemblywoman Byrnes (133rd Assembly District) honored Dr. M. Fernanda Astiz who currently serves as the Mount Morris Library Director. As a native of Argentina and a naturalized United States citizen, Fernanda has a deep appreciation for the value and power of intercultural dialogue and understanding which can be seen throughout her work in the library.

As a librarian, Fernanda is committed to fostering inclusive library environments in which different voices, perspectives, and backgrounds are welcomed and supported through a wide array of literacy, educational, and community-building programming.

Assemblywoman Byrnes said, “I am thrilled to recognize Dr. Astiz for her dedication to the Mount Morris community. She has been an incredible asset to the library, developing literacy opportunities for both English and Spanish-speaking patrons, and creating a supportive environment within which patrons can be empowered and educated.”

Photos of the honorees were displayed in the New York State Capitol throughout March. Honorees were also invited to a reception at the Governor’s mansion.

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