



Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Isabella Sementilli

Isabella Sementilli is a true inspiration through her survival of a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and her work to educate others about overcoming challenges and reducing incidents of school bullying.

As a fifth grade student, a school bully yanked Ms. Sementilli's chair out from under her, causing a concussion, fractured tailbone, and neck and back injuries. This left her with NDPH and Occipital Neuralgia – two rare and debilitating headache disorders.

Tap dancing and tennis lessons were quickly replaced with doctor appointments, scans, and years of physical therapy. The TBI forced Ms. Sementilli to be home-schooled from eighth grade until graduating from high school in 2021.

Although she faced many obstacles, Ms. Sementilli was not deterred from making a positive difference. She tweaked her Papa's Italian cookie recipe to make it her own, creating "Iznettes®" – small, peanut and tree-nut free cookies with icing and sprinkles. She began to sell them at her family's restaurant, Scotti's Restaurant and Pizzeria in Schenectady, and now has a U.S. Registered Trademark on Iznettes®; her motto is "Never Crumble!®."

Ms. Sementilli has also written, illustrated, and published a children's book, *The Short Story of One Tough Cookie: A True Story!* to share her message – "Be nice. Be kind. Share a smile," and no matter what, "Be strong, Be a tough cookie, and most importantly, 'Never Crumble!®'."

In addition, Ms. Sementilli started her own business – *Bella Cervella*, Italian for "beautiful brain," and her own line of Never Crumble!® apparel. She recently released a Never Crumble!® doll. The proceeds of her products are donated to anti-bullying and brain awareness organizations.

Ms. Sementilli has received numerous awards, including the Ruth Bader Ginsberg Agent of Change, Neil & Jane Golub Making a Difference Award from the Anti-Defamation League of NY, Hearts and Heroes Award, the COVID-19 Acts of Kindness Heroes Award, Literary Champion Award, and the #WhoCaresIDo International Challenge for standing up to bullying. She has been featured in Cricket Media *FACES Magazine*, "Kids Changing the World: Cookies for a Cause." She has also initiated the "Isabella Marie Sementilli Never Crumble!® Scholarship" at Niskayuna High School, which is presented to a student who has overcome an obstacle in their life.

When she is not working at her family's restaurant, Ms. Sementilli is sharing her story and positive message at schools and within the community.

**Isabella Sementilli was selected as a
2023 Women of Distinction honoree by Senator James N. Tedisco**

