



# *Women of* DISTINCTION

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## HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

*Lauren Shields*

Lauren Shields was diagnosed with coxsackie myocarditis at eight years old, which caused her heart to fail. She needed a heart transplant and was placed on a long wait list. After over a month, she received a heart transplant at New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital and began a long journey to recovery.

Still in the hospital, Ms. Shields was lacking energy and losing weight after her transplant. At times, she could not even speak. Then, she had a stroke, impacting the right side of her body. To recover, she would endure weeks of intense physical therapy and eventually outpatient rehabilitation, where she learned to walk again.

After her enormous battle, and finally on the road to recovery, Ms. Shields decided she wanted to advocate for organ donation so no other child would go through what she went through. As an advocate for organ donation, she began speaking at local naturalization ceremonies in Rockland County to encourage residents to register as organ donors. She also raised awareness by sharing her story of survival.

Ms. Shields decided to take her activism further, contacting Senator David Carlucci to help pass "Lauren's Law" in 2012. The law requires those filling out a driver license application or renewal to answer "yes" or "skip this question" when asked whether they want to be added to the State's "Donate Life" registry. Prior to Lauren's Law, applicants could skip over the question without filling in an answer. The law is credited with helping increase organ donation in New York State.

Over the years, Ms. Shields has fought to have the law extended, and often partners with LiveOnNY, Donate Life New York State, and Rockland Organ Donation Alliance to promote organ donation awareness and advocate for other legislative reforms to help save lives.

Ms. Shields is currently a student at Dominican College in Rockland County, with dreams of going on to medical school. She hopes to one day continue sharing her own journey with her patients as a pediatric cardiologist.

***Lauren Shields was selected as a  
2020 Woman of Distinction honoree by Senator David Carlucci.***

