

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



Giving Thanks for the People Who Strengthen Our Communities

As we approach Thanksgiving and the holiday season, I find myself reflecting on the past year. Across the 54th Senate District, I've witnessed countless acts of kindness, service, and generosity by individuals of all ages and organizations of all sizes.

Take, for instance, the generosity of Iva Christiano, a 5th grade student at York Central School and a 4-H member. After raising her prized lamb "Hero," Iva chose to donate every dollar from Hero's sale at the Hemlock Fair to Honor Flight Rochester. She was inspired by her grandfather, a Vietnam War veteran, who traveled on an Honor Flight mission. Iva could have used that money for anything. Instead, she chose to honor those who have served... an extraordinary gesture from a remarkable young woman.

Twelve-year-old BMX racer Tanner Lamagna is another young person making a difference. Tanner did not simply endure a serious injury; he met it with a courage that united an entire community. Families, teammates, neighbors, and even strangers continue to rally behind the message #TannerStrong, lifting Tanner as he inspires all of us with his strength, determination, and positivity.

Our brave first responders are always prepared to respond to a call that a neighbor is in need.

I was reminded of their dedication and commitment during a massive warehouse fire that occurred over Labor Day weekend. Firefighters, law enforcement, and first responders from multiple agencies and counties worked side by side battling a raging fire and protecting nearby homes and businesses. As they worked through the night, caring people dropped off bottled water, ice, and food for those serving on the front lines.

Our active-duty military members and our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country and our freedoms. It is an honor to join with area elected officials and citizens to recognize their selfless service. The Town of Chili, under the leadership of Supervisor David Dunning, hosted a Veterans Day breakfast followed by a "Line of Honor" procession. Watching our veterans being greeted by dozens of cheering people waving American flags and carrying homemade signs of support was very uplifting. But one of the most memorable moments happened when the kindergarten basketball players paused their practice, lined up, and high-fived the veterans. It was beautiful to see the pride and appreciation on the faces of so many.

Across our district, there are so many more examples of people showing up to support others... from restaurants serving free Thanksgiving meals to churches sponsoring holiday giving trees and businesses collecting food and warm clothing donations.

This Thanksgiving and every day, I appreciate the kindness and service of the people of the 54th District. It reminds me of why I entered public service... to help keep our state a place where people can thrive and future generations, including our children and grandchildren, can build their lives with confidence and hope.

While challenges remain, I am inspired by the strength, compassion, and generosity that define the people of this district.

From my family to yours, I wish you a warm, meaningful, and peaceful Thanksgiving.

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