

# Hope — and chicken soup — for the needy

BY MICHAEL R. EBERT

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From feeding the hungry to honoring military veterans, Mary Ellen McCrossen is dedicated to helping her community.

"There's always time to help and to see what the need is in the community," said the Smithtown resident, whose service efforts include coordinating blood, clothing and food drives for Catholic Health, and sitting on the boards of the Smithtown Historical Society and the Kings Park and Smithtown chambers of commerce.

Her activities led to her being named a Woman of Distinction in 2023 by state Sen. Mario Mattera (R-St. James).

By day, McCrossen, 60, works as a community relations manager and an emergency medical services liaison

for St. Catherine of Siena Hospital in Smithtown, where she is credited with increasing blood donations in recent years by 75%. She also works



as an EMS liaison at St. Charles Hospital in Port Jefferson. Both hospitals are in the Catholic Health network.

Her efforts at the two hospitals have included piloting a "Meals of Hope" program, in which employees package chicken rice soup ingredients for distribution to people in need across Long Island. The program has since expanded to all Catholic Health hospitals and last year yielded more than 80,000 meals, she said.

McCrossen is also known for honoring employees who served the nation by distributing pins, decorating the hospital with American flags and leading Veterans Day ceremonies.

She said her community spirit was instilled in her by her late mother, Anne Marie O'Doherty, a single mother with six children who was the first female sergeant, lieu-

**Mary Ellen McCrossen was named a Woman of Distinction for her community efforts.**

**There's always time to help."**

— Mary Ellen McCrossen, of Smithtown

tenant and captain in the Nassau County Sheriff's Department. "We're so fortunate and have been given so much, it's really the least we can do to give back," McCrossen said.

McCrossen is also a member of the St. James Civic Association, St. James Chamber of Commerce, Nesconset Chamber of Commerce, Smithtown Youth Advisory Board, the Women's Diversity Network, Sheriff Errol D. Toulon Jr.'s Re-Entry Task Force and Community Advisory Board and

the Ambassador Program for the Suffolk County Police Department's Fourth Precinct.

"Mary Ellen is a friend who is always there for her family, her neighbors, her community and everyone who is in need," Mattera said. "I have had the good fortune of working with her on many efforts to help our fellow Smithtown residents."

In addition to her community work, the mother of four donated a kidney 10 years ago to her brother Neal O'Doherty, who has since died.

"I wish I had 10 kidneys to give away," McCrossen said. "People will sign up to be an organ donor after they die, which is wonderful, but if you're able to do something while you're alive and see the results, to me there's no greater gift."

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