

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION honoring Sonia Wagner upon the occasion of her designation as recipient of the Edgar Francis (Eddie) Reed Annual Suicide Prevention, Advocacy and Leadership Award

WHEREAS, Individuals who give of their time and energies and serve the best interests of their communities are an asset beyond remuneration and cannot be sufficiently extolled; and

WHEREAS, Sonia Wagner has given not only of her time and energies but also of her competence, intelligence and leadership and consequently has been designated for special recognition; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to honor Sonia Wagner upon the occasion of her designation as recipient of the Edgar Francis (Eddie) Reed Annual Suicide Prevention, Advocacy and Leadership Award; and

WHEREAS, May is Mental Health Awareness Month in the State of New York; therefore, it is fitting during this particular time to recognize the civic endeavors of those remarkable individuals who have been called upon to contribute their time and talents to increasing awareness of mental health conditions and to supporting the mental wellness of all; and

WHEREAS, Named in honor of Edgar Francis Reed, who took his own life at the age of 17, the Edgar Francis (Eddie) Reed Annual Suicide Prevention, Advocacy and Leadership Award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated exceptional work in suicide prevention and advocacy and who have displayed the courage to lead others to be the voices of suicide prevention; and

WHEREAS, This year's recipient, Sonia Wagner, is the Executive Vice President of the Mental Health Association of Rockland County; and

WHEREAS, Suicide is the third leading cause of death in the United States, among young adults and adolescents, 15 to 24 years of age; and

WHEREAS, Over 150,000 New York State teenagers attempt suicide each year; and

WHEREAS, Depressive disorders are consistently the most prevalent disorders among adolescent suicide victims; and

WHEREAS, Sustained prevention actions including enhancing support systems for vulnerable youth, implementing case finding with accompanying referral and treatment, developing risk reduction plans and enhancing protective factors can save lives; and

WHEREAS, Our youth must be given every opportunity to survive and be hopeful for a future as an adult; and

WHEREAS, Last year, with the blessings of MHA and the financial support of the New York State Office of Mental Health, Sonia Wagner helped launch and chaired a new Countywide suicide prevention task force; the task force included representatives from the veteran, hospital, nonprofit, LGBTQ, and government communities; and

WHEREAS, One of the primary gaps in service that the task force identified was training in when and how to ask people about suicidal thinking; so, the task force hosted a series of evidence-based suicide prevention trainings to gatekeepers and non-clinical staff, one of which was dedicated to residential programs; and

WHEREAS, In addition, Sonia Wagner has advocated for MHA to support the veteran community and in July of 2013, the agency will launch a support group for significant others of veterans with childcare provided; and

WHEREAS, A licensed clinical social worker with Masters degrees in social work and management, Sonia Wagner has served as executive director of two nonprofits - Jewish Family Service of Orange County and Response of Suffolk County; and

WHEREAS, Under her leadership, Response became nationally accredited for its suicide prevention/crisis intervention hotline; in this capacity, Sonia Wagner also initiated an online crisis intervention program for teens who prefer "chatting" to talking; and

WHEREAS, Years after her tenure, these programs continue to help tens of thousands of individuals feeling alone to connect to another person and find help; a strong ally of LGBTQ rights, Sonia Wagner brought Jewish Family Service into a new arena and the agency started a P-FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) support group, offered programs to educate schools in their efforts to support LGBTQ youth, and hosted discussion groups for teachers and others working with young people; and

WHEREAS, Suicide prevention was at the core of all of these efforts as recent studies have found that the vast majority of LGBTQ youth are bullied and at greatly elevated risk for suicide attempts; and

WHEREAS, Sonia Wagner is a strong believer in volunteerism and has volunteered as a reader to the visually impaired, a stable assistant at an equestrian therapeutic school, a painter for Habitat for Humanity, and an adoption coordinator for an animal shelter; and

WHEREAS, MHA Rockland, as a nonprofit helping children and adults for more than 60 years to overcome significant challenges and embrace life, has strongly supported Sonia Wagner's promotion of suicide prevention both within the agency and for the community as a whole; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the entire period of her community service, a period of constructive involvement, Sonia Wagner has stood constant in dignity, good grace and humor; and

WHEREAS, Rare indeed is the impressive dedication shown by an individual for the benefit of others which Sonia Wagner has displayed throughout her life; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when individuals of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor Sonia Wagner upon the occasion of her designation as recipient of the Edgar Francis (Eddie) Reed Annual Suicide Prevention, Advocacy and Leadership Award; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Sonia Wagner.