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Sullivan County Democratic Committee holds 100th Jeffersonian Dinner

BLOOMINGBURG - The Sullivan County Democratic Committee recently held their 100th Jeffersonian Dinner, the 230th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution, at the Eagle's Nest and honored; Chris Cunningham, Thelma McIver and Carol Montana.

Chairwoman Donna Schick along with Kathleen LaBuda and the entire committee organized the dinner which included remarks from Julian Schreiber, candidate for New York Supreme Court Justice, 3rd JD and from the 2018 US Congress 19th District candidates: Jeffrey Beals, David Clegg, Brian Flynn, Gareth Rhodes, and Patrick Ryan.

Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther introduced the keynote speaker, New York Secretary of State, Rossana Rosado. In addition to providing a few highlights around the issues she addresses in her official capacity, Rosado said, "I applaud all of you for being an example of what working together can look like."

During Honoree Chris Cunningham's introduction, Kathy LaBuda disclosed the two may have not always seen eye to eye on issues during closed door meetings, however, they did agree to speak publicly with one voice and "stand for what is right and service to others." Quoting John Quincy Adams, LaBuda added, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and

become more, you are a leader. Chris, you are a leader."

Cunningham thanked his wife, Renee and their children, Erin and Daniel as well as expressing his humble gratitude for the honor. He explained he was raised in a family which did discuss politics at the dinner table, by a father who was a previous Town of Bethel Chair, a mother who worked at the election polls and also agreed in a united Democratic party.

Cunningham's long list of accomplishments leading to this recognition include being a member of the Bethel Town Council and Democratic Committee before becoming elected to the Sullivan County legislature with four years as Chairman, then Commissioner of the Division of Health and Family Services/Commissioner of Dept. of Family Services for Sullivan County.

After a number of years overseeing various departments, he has returned to serve on the Sullivan County Democratic Executive Committee while manager of the non-profit Bethel Local Development Corp. and running the Cunningham family farm with his siblings. Next to speak, Sullivan County Director of Communications Dan Hust introduced honoree, Carol Montana, his friend and former coworker at the Sullivan County Democrat.

Montana's accomplishments include various media positions of increasing responsibility leading her to being the Editor of the Sullivan County Democrat as well as being the Founder and Artistic Director of the community theatre company, Big Sky Productions, for 21 years. Once she retires, Montana plans to be more involved in the community. "I am honored and inspired to stay involved to make the world a better place," Montana said.

Town of Liberty Democratic Chair, Bill Liblick introduced Thelma McIver and called out among her many achievements, her desire to be the voice of all of the people.

McIver is noted as the first minority woman to chair a Town Democratic Committee in Liberty as well as a founder of the Black and

Latino Democratic Caucus. McIver was a shop steward for 20 of her 28 years of union affiliation, was Chairwoman of the Sullivan County AIDS Task Force and received an award from the Sullivan Renaissance for her work with reintegrating homeless veterans into permanent housing through Begin Again Transitional Services (BATS).

At the podium, accepting her honor, McIver said, "My daughter was a volunteer in the womb," and explained Laurice Renee Maire "Ali" Budd has been with her through many aspects of the journey and was herself a member of the Young Democrats.

Earlier in the evening, McIver was asked if she would offer any advice to young women today to which she said, "Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid to step up. Do not be afraid to speak up. Do not be afraid."

McIver closed with the following remarks, "We have to come together, hand in hand, we, as Democrats can make change."

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By: Sharon MacGregor | Democrat

From the left, Donna Schick, Carol Montana, Chris Cunningham, Thelma McIver, Kathleen LaBuda.

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