



## Three from Staten Island Honored at Mayor's Neighborhood Achievement Awards

BY MALENA CAROLLO

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- Under a tent strung with white lights on the lawn of Gracie Mansion, Mayor Michael Bloomberg honored 16 New Yorkers Monday at the 2013 Neighborhood Achievement Awards. Among the recipients were three of Staten Island's own.

Along with Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Robert Steel and Commissioner of NYC Department of Small Business Services Robert Walsh, Bloomberg began the ceremony with some lighthearted banter.

"Tomorrow there is the Major League All-Star baseball game at Citi Field," he said, "but tonight it's the heavy-hitters of the small-business world here at Gracie Mansion."

The awards recognize outstanding individuals, small businesses and organizations in the boroughs whose businesses have spurred economic growth in their corners of the city. Each honoree was nominated and then selected by a board of members from public, private and non-profit groups.

A special recognition was given this year via the Helping Hand Award for post-Hurricane Sandy relief efforts.

"The small businesses are what keep this city's neighborhoods strong and moving forward," Bloomberg continued.



**Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Commissioner Robert Walsh with award recipients**

Rab's Country Lanes of Dongan Hills was the Island recipient of the Small Business of the Year Award. Rab's annual Bowl-A-Thon raised more than \$500,000, and the \$25,000 in scholarships given put it on the

map as a stand-out business in the borough. Owner Frank Wilkinson came to the stage to claim the award and take a picture with Walsh and the other presenters.

"We're just running our business every day and doing what we can for the community at home," Wilkinson said before the ceremony. "It's pretty surreal, it's pretty cool [to receive the award]." His family business was nominated by the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce.

Islander Fred Cerullo III, president and CEO of the Grand Central Partnership, was among three honored with the Business Improvement District Leadership Award.

"My plan is to keep looking ahead and to keep supporting the men and women who are creating jobs and improving our quality of life," Cerullo said.

Grand Central Partnership works to maintain the appearance of Midtown Manhattan. With public safety, sanitation, tourism, capital improvements and external affairs divisions, the company oversees \$40 million in beautification and improvement projects.

"In the last 12 years, if I needed to call someone to mull over an idea, Fred Cerullo [was whom I called]," Walsh said as Cerullo departed the stage.

The final Staten Islander honored at the ceremony was Lynn Kelly, president and CEO of the Snug Harbor Cultural Center

and Botanical Garden. Hers was the only organization that brought home the Cultural Award.

"It gives us even more energy to really make Snug Harbor a destination for the city of New York," Ms. Kelly said. "It really puts us on the map in a new way to receive this honor."

Snug Harbor captured the award through its efforts in their revitalized SHARP/Snug Harbor Artist Residency Program and Heritage Farm efforts. Heritage Farm promotes education about locally grown food, working to feed those in need on Staten Island. Thus far, they have sold 14,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables free of pesticide, donating more than 3,400 meals to boot.

The ceremony wrapped up with brief remarks from Bloomberg. The guests dispersed to sample catering from local businesses and the music and bread of two of the honorees.