

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 28, 2011

**ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS CELEBRATE WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH**

**Councilwoman Patty Spango, Alison V. Bryant, Rebecca Doggett and Ellen M. Klein  
Honored at March 23<sup>rd</sup> Event**

(Newark, NJ) – The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders held its Annual Women's History Month Celebration on Wednesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, at the Hall of Records. The sponsors were Freeholder President Blonnie R. Watson of Newark, Freeholder Linda Lordi Cavanaugh of West Orange, Freeholder Carol Y. Clark of East Orange and Freeholder Patricia Sebold of Livingston. The program was held in the Freeholder Board's Chambers and was followed by a catered reception.

The accomplished and highly-respected honorees of this year's event were: Alison V. Bryant of Irvington, Rebecca Doggett of East Orange, Ellen M. Klein of Livingston and West Orange Councilwoman Patty Spango.



The Women's History Month honorees and their Freeholder sponsors gather for a group photo: (left to right) Freeholder Patricia Sebold of Livingston, Ellen M. Klein of Livingston, Freeholder Linda Lordi Cavanaugh of West Orange, Rebecca Doggett of East Orange, Councilwoman Patty Spango of West Orange, Freeholder Carol Y. Clark of East Orange, Alison V. Bryant of Irvington, and Freeholder President Blonnie R. Watson of Newark. (Photo by Glen Frieson)

**Alison V. Bryant** of Irvington is the Director of the Church Women United (CWM) Food Pantry, which provides food and clothing to indigent residents of the greater Irvington area. She has also served as a facilitator for The Jason Foundation, a program that addresses youth suicide awareness, education and prevention, and is a member of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program Advisory Council for Newark Emergency Services for Families, Precious Littles Early Childhood Development Center, and a board member for Bridges Outreach, Inc. She has also been an Irvington Democratic District Leader, a 2nd Vice President and President of the NJ Library Trustee Association, a Commissioner for the Irvington International Trade Commission, and an Executive Board member for both the Irvington and East Orange Chambers of Commerce. Ms. Bryant earned her B.A. from Northeastern University and her Master of Public Administration degree from Rutgers University.



Freeholder President Blonnie R. Watson (left) presents the Board's award to Alison V. Bryant of Irvington. (Photo by Glen Frieson)

Freeholder President Blonnie R. Watson introduced her honoree, Alison V. Bryant, by saying, "In these times of so much need, when governments are forced to cut budgets for vital social service programs, God sends very special people like Alison to bring comfort and assistance to those who struggle each and every day." During her acceptance remarks, Ms. Bryant first paid homage to her late mother, Alice Marie Bryant, and then thanked her friends, family and supporters, "...both male and female, who have allowed me to do the wonderful work that I do within my community."

**Rebecca Doggett** of East Orange was a Senior Fellow with the NJ Institute for Social Justice (NJISJ), a non-profit that does statewide research and advocacy work in economic justice and prisoner re-entry. There she helped develop programs and policies and established the Newark/Essex Construction Careers Consortium, a pre-apprenticeship program that has qualified African-American and Latino men and women from the Greater Newark Area. She was also the first Director of the Essex County Department of Citizen Services, and the first African-American female executive at the Port Authority of NY & NJ where she established the Office of Business and Job Opportunity and the Regional Alliance for Small Contractors. Ms. Doggett also served as Auditor General of the Newark Public Schools and there established the Office of Community Development. She earned her B.A. from Upsala College and her M.A. from NYU. She is married to Joseph Thomasberger and has one daughter, three stepchildren and three grandchildren.



Rebecca Doggett of East Orange (left) accepts the Board's award from Freeholder Carol Y. Clark, also of East Orange. (Photo by Glen Frieson)

Freeholder Carol Clark praised her honoree, Rebecca Doggett, for her long and impressive resume, but also admitted that she'd only recently learned that Ms. Doggett had also served as the first Director of the County's Department of Citizen Services. "The fact that I've known Becky for as long as I have without knowing all the little nuances about her", said Freeholder Clark, "says to me that she is also humble, and that's a wonderful thing." She went on to say, "To be as accomplished as you are, and to have done all that you have, I salute you!" Ms. Doggett thanked Freeholder Clark and the entire Board for making her a part of such a wonderful event because, "...Women's History Month gives us the opportunity to thank the many women in our history who have suffered, sacrificed and dreamed." "We, the women of *this* era, stand on *their* shoulders", she said, "having been able to realize some of the dreams our foremothers could only hope and pray would someday be fulfilled."

**Ellen Klein** has served the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), Essex County Section, since

1991. She has been a Board Member for more than 25 years and has served on myriad committees, including: Board Structure, Project Evaluation, Project Development, Bylaws and Strategic Planning. She has also been a Board Advisor for NCJW, a Co-Chair for Back2School Store Gaelen Family Resource Center, Chair and Co-Chair for Focus on Art Exhibition Administration, and has been actively involved with the Teen Dating Abuse Project. Ms. Klein also served as Director, Officer and Member of the Jewish Community Center of MetroWest where she chaired numerous committees. She was also elected to the Livingston Board of Education where she served both as President and Vice President. Ms. Klein resides in Livingston with her husband, Peter, and they have two adult children, Amy and Steven.



Ellen M. Klein of Livingston (center) accepts the Board's award from Freeholder Patricia Sebold (left), also of Livingston. Mrs. Klein was accompanied by her husband, Peter. (Photo by Glen Frieson)

When introducing her honoree, Ellen M. Klein of Livingston, Freeholder Patricia Sebold referred to the National Women's History Project's 2011 theme of "Our History is our Strength" saying, "Knowing women's stories provides essential role models that are genuinely needed to face the extraordinary changes and unrelenting challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Learning about women's tenacity, courage and creativity throughout the centuries", she continued, "is a tremendous source of strength. And these are the very reasons I am delighted to honor today my good friend, Ellen M. Klein, for Women's History Month." In her remarks, Ms. Klein spoke of the joys of volunteering, of the diverse knowledge and skills one picks up along the way, and of the importance of mentoring to develop future leadership. "The best thing about today", she said, "is that I am being recognized and honored for something that I love doing: volunteering. How fortunate I am!"

**The Honorable Patty Spango** is a lifelong resident of West Orange where she is currently serving her first term on the West Orange Municipal Council. Prior to her election, she was deeply involved in the civic affairs of the Township as a member of the West Orange Zoning Board and the West Orange PTA. She has also been a supporter of the Mountain Top League, the West Orange PAL, the Open Space Trust Fund, Downtown Redevelopment, Valley Redevelopment and the Oskar Schindler Performing Arts Center (OSPAC). Councilwoman Spango is also a highly successful businesswoman. She is the owner of Starlite Restaurant, a West Orange landmark located on the corner of Pleasant Valley Way and Mt. Pleasant Avenue, and a member of the West Orange Chamber of Commerce, the New Jersey Restaurant Association and the New Jersey Business and Industry Association. Councilwoman Spango currently serves as Chair of the West Orange Democratic County Committee and is the proud mother of three children: Tricia, James and Ralph.



Freeholder Linda Lordi Cavanaugh of West Orange (left) presents the Board's award to West Orange Councilwoman Patty Spango. (Photo by Glen Frieson)

Freeholder Linda Lordi Cavanaugh spoke about the importance of "...recognizing those outstanding women in our communities who contribute so much but who are too often unsung." "Patty Spango", she said, "is one of those women. She may be diminutive in size, but she is not diminutive in stature." "You can always count on Patty", said Freeholder Cavanaugh. "You can count on her to tell you the truth, and you can count on her to tell you exactly what she thinks. She's got gumption. I really admire her for that, and I am delighted that she is my honoree." Councilwoman Spango commented that women have come a long way, "There was a time when a woman could not even cast a vote, let alone hold public office or own a business. Yet I stand before you as an elected official, a successful small business owner, a Democratic Chairwoman, a grandmother, a mother, a sister, and most of all, a woman." She

expressed her humility for being recognized by the Board saying, "I accept this honor in the name of all the great Essex County women who blazed the trail before me so I may serve as an elected official."

Musical entertainment for the program was provided by Janet Hall of Montclair and Della Robinson of Union.

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