

Empire State Opioid Epidemic Innovation Challenge

September 28-30, 2018

Columbia University Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science



Linda Ventura of Kings Park was unexpectedly and tragically drawn into the war against drugs and addiction when she lost her son, Thomas, to an overdose in 2012. Instead of allowing this loss to define her as a victim, Ms. Ventura was motivated to turn her tragedy into hope by working to help other New York families battling Substance Use Disorder specifically the heroin and opiate crisis.

To that end, Ms. Ventura established the Thomas' Hope Foundation to help fight for the lives of other young people and empower parents to help their loved ones. The Foundation is dedicated to promoting the awareness and prevention of drug addiction and to achieving victory for those individuals seeking sobriety through education, advocacy, research and treatment. The Foundation also produces a weekly television show, "Resolutions for Recovery", formally known as "Long Island in Crisis". The show furthers the efforts of education of Substance Use Disorder.

Ms. Ventura has been a staunch advocate on behalf of our families and communities. Her work has put much-needed attention to this insidious epidemic and helps countless people understand the human suffering caused by drug abuse.

In addition to her efforts with Thomas' Hope Foundation, Linda selflessly gives her time and talent as a Board Member of Families in Support of Treatment(FIST), St. Joseph's Treatment Facility in Saranac Lake, the Nassau County Heroin Task Force and the Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency Leadership Council.

Ms. Ventura is the 2017 NYS Senate Woman of Distinction by House Majority Leader, the honorable Senator John J. Flanagan. Ms. Ventura has been honored for her efforts by the Caron Foundation, the Long Island Recovery Association and with the Sober St. Patrick Day Spirit Award.

Linda is the proud mother of Andrew, a student at Farmingdale State College, and Jennifer, a wife and mom who has provided her with 3 grandchildren. Andrew and Jennifer provide their mom with constant support and honor the memory of their brother through their personal involvement at Thomas' Hope Foundation.