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**Report: The Greater New York Chamber of Commerce 2015 Women's History Month Awards Breakfast Celebration at the Hard Rock Café on March 27<sup>th</sup> in Times Square**



*From Left to Right: Susan Lee, Founder of Camp Broadway; Kerry Kennedy, President of the RFK Center for Justice and Human Rights; Cynthia DiBartolo, CEO of Tigress Financial Partners; Nancy Hernandez, State Comptroller's Office; Mwisu Chisunka, New York State Business Ombudswoman; Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President; Mark Jaffe, President and CEO of the Greater New York Chamber of Commerce; Kathleen Cooney Bonistall, Founder and Vice Chair of SPEAK OUTside Campus; Lou Gordon, Director of BALCONY*

On Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, the Greater New York Chamber of Commerce (GNYCC) hosted a networking breakfast and forum celebrating Women's History Month at the Hard Rock Café in NYC. The event was attended by approximately 200 representatives of New York's business, non-profit, government and labor communities and honored 7 women who have done extraordinary work in advancing women's rights through their actions and example.

Following a brief networking breakfast **Mark Jaffe, President and CEO of the New York Chamber of Commerce** ([www.chamber.nyc](http://www.chamber.nyc)), kicked off the forum by thanking the event sponsors and the Hard Rock Café. In his opening speech, Jaffe emphasized the Chamber's commitment to gender equality and pay equality.

Jaffe introduced his fellow emcees beginning with **Lou Gordon, Director, Business and Labor Coalition of New York (BALCONY, [www.balconynewyork.com](http://www.balconynewyork.com))**. Gordon said BALCONY was thrilled to be a part of the event: "This celebration of Women's history month by the Greater New York Chamber of Commerce is a key moment where BALCONY can recognize the significant achievement of its female members and friends, including Cynthia DiBartolo, CEO of Tigress Financial Partners. We are proud to participate in this annual forum and pleased to present honorees Susan Lee, founder of Camp Broadway, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer," stated Gordon.

Jaffe then presented the second event emcee **Cynthia DiBartolo, Chairwoman of the Greater NY Chamber of Commerce and the CEO of Tigress Financial Partners** ([www.tigressfp.com](http://www.tigressfp.com))- a firm she started after years of working in the male dominated financial services sector. DiBartolo stressed the importance of businesswomen being strong advocates for women and minority owned businesses. Cynthia said that she was thrilled to share the stage with the exceptional women being honored and spoke about the importance of recognizing "these women who do so much for our communities and our children."



*(from Left to Right: Alan Lubin, Co-Chair of BALCONY, Cynthia DiBartolo, Chairwoman of the Greater NY Chamber of Commerce and the CEO of Tigress Financial, and Lou Gordon, Director of BALCONY)*

Cynthia introduced the first honoree, **Kathleen Cooney Bonistall, founder and Vice Chair of PEACE OUTside Campus** ([www.peaceoutsidecampus.org](http://www.peaceoutsidecampus.org)), an organization established by Kathleen after her daughter was the victim of a deadly violent crime at her off-campus apartment at the University of Delaware. PEACE OUTside Campus partners with colleges and high schools to reach thousands of students and families with a message of safety. In her speech Kathleen was enthusiastic about being honored by the Chamber and thankful for the opportunity to further the message of safety risk reduction on College and other campuses.



*Kathleen Cooney Bonistall, Founder and Vice Chair of PEACE OUTside Campus*

The next honoree was **Manhattan Borough President, Gale Brewer** ([www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov](http://www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov)).



*(from left to right: Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President; Cynthia DiBartolo, Chairwoman, GNYCC, and CEO of Tigress Financial)*

Gale Brewer, who thanked the Chamber for the important work they do, spoke about the importance of advancing women's rights both by ensuring that women are well-represented in government and through proactive legislation. In particular she voiced her support for a paid family leave act. She also spoke about her ongoing effort to get as many women, especially young women, to serve on local community boards as possible. Brewer discussed several intersections of women's rights and current political issues and highlighted small business support, citing the fact that historically small business has "provided the majority of jobs for New Yorkers," and is "the gateway to the middle class." Brewer then introduced her Small Business Initiative which seeks to help NYC's storefronters keep pace with escalating rents.

As part of the initiative, the Office of the Borough President recently released a report intended to help small businesses grow and thrive.

For the full report please follow the link below:

[\*Small Business, Big Impact: Expanding Opportunity for Manhattan's Storefronters\*](#)

The Chamber honored **Mwisa Chisunka, New York State's Business Ombudswoman** ([www.esd.ny.gov](http://www.esd.ny.gov)). In her current role Mwisa educates businesses about tax laws and provides options for issue resolution. She is an advisor to legislative and executive branch leadership, helping them to identify and implement business tax related policy and compliance initiatives. Chisunka said she was humbled to be the first woman chosen for this role in New York State.



*Mwisa Chisunka,  
NYS Business  
Ombudswoman*

The following honoree was **Susan Lee, founder of Camp Broadway** ([www.campbroadway.com](http://www.campbroadway.com)), an enrichment program for theater-loving kids. She highlighted the lifelong learning that can be found through participation in the performing arts. To date the organization has hosted 30,000 children from around the world at its summer camps and reached hundreds of thousands more through education workshops over 20 years of work. Susan emphasized the annual financial contribution of more than a \$1 billion by Broadway to the New York Economy.



*Susan Lee, Founder of  
Camp Broadway*

Then Cynthia Dibartolo introduced **Kerry Kennedy, President of Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights** ([www.rfkcenter.org](http://www.rfkcenter.org)), calling her "a true champion for equity." Kerry spoke about how women's human rights violations are arguably the most pressing international human rights issue. Kennedy endorsed stronger penalties and a stricter legal code on cases of violence against woman, here and abroad. She championed a school initiative her organization runs that aims to teach children to stand up against bullying and violence and speak truth to power.



*Kerry Kennedy,  
President of Robert F.  
Kennedy Human Rights*

The final honoree was **Karen Magee, the first female President of the New York State United Teachers**

(NYSUT, [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org)). She was unfortunately unable to attend the event as she was engaged in the budget wars in Albany. Instead **BALCONY Founder and former Executive Vice President of NYSUT, Alan Lubin**, accepted the award on Karen's behalf. Alan spoke about the key role that women play in educating our children as well as the critical importance of business and labor working together to ensure New York's children are provided the best possible education.

Another honoree unable to attend was **Ruthie Davis**

([www.ruthiedavis.com](http://www.ruthiedavis.com)). Ruthie is a shoe designer and distributor who sells her brand in top-tier retail establishments in 100 locations in 35 countries.

**Nancy Hernandez** from the New York State Comptroller's Office

([www.osc.state.ny.us](http://www.osc.state.ny.us)) was also present to honor the Chamber and the awardees on behalf of her office and Comptroller Tom DiNapoli

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Report by Nicholas Kapustinsky, Policy and Communications, BALCONY

*BALCONY, the Business and Labor Coalition of New York, represents more than 1,000 New York businesses, labor unions, and trade associations. BALCONY seeks common ground in the public policy debate in New York to spur economic development through the adoption of business/union friendly, socially responsible common sense laws that maintain and improve the quality of life for working New Yorkers.*

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