HERstory

MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Obama, Hamm among nine chosen for Women's HOF

SENECA FALLS (AP) — Former first lady Michelle Obama and soccer star Mia Hamm have been chosen for the National Women's Hall of Fame as part of a Class of 2021 announced March 8 that also includes former PepsiCo Chief Executive Indra Nooyi and retired Brig. Gen. Rebecca Halstead.

Halstead commanded in combat as the first female commanding general at the strategic level in Iraq.

NASA mathematician Katherine Johnson, who died last year, also will be inducted during an Oct. 2 ceremony, along with the late author Octavia Butler, Native American artist Joy Harjo, abolitionist Emily Howland and artist Judy Chicago.

The National Women's Hall of Fame inducts a new class every other year in Seneca Falls, the site of the first women's rights convention.

As in other years, this year's ceremony will be in person, hall officials said, but tickets will not be available until April or May, when there is a better understanding of COVID-19 protocols for live events.

The ceremony also will be livestreamed.

INDRA NOOYI

(AP File Photo)

MICHELLE OBAMA

(AP File Photo)

REBECCA HALSTEAD

(AP File Photo)

MIA HAMM

(AP File Photo)

Utica National celebrates International Women's Day

NEW HARTFORD – When Kristen Martin, President and Chief Operating Officer of the Utica National Insurance Group, was named to her current position two years ago, she reflected on the significance of the appointment.

"Like most working women, I have juggled my career and family and, at times, it has been a hectic journey for my husband and me," she noted. "Raising two great kids and being the COO of Utica National is something that I am really proud of. I am also proud of all the women who work here and who give their very best every day to make our company great. On International Women's Day, we celebrate the contribution of women in our organization and others, and help each other achieve the careers that make us all proud."

International Women's Day is a global day, held March 8, which celebrated the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marked a call to action to raise awareness about women's equality.

A positive company culture

Martin, who joined the company in 2001, is among several women in senior management at Utica National, which boasts a workforce comprised of 60% women – a figure which mirrors the percentage across the entire insurance industry, based on a survey by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

That group includes Jolene Casatelli, Executive Vice President and Senior Claims Officer; Sarah Mariani-Hinman, Vice President and Director of the Marketing Center of Excellence, Communications and Customer Engagement; and Shannon Peck, Senior Vice President and Chief Customer Experience Officer. In addition, the company's Boards of Directors include Zelda Holcomb, Ph.D., retired Owner/Consultant Holcomb Associates, LLC, Educational Consulting Group; and Linda Romano, Attorney at Law, Counsel to Bond, Schoeneck & King.

"I find it gratifying to work for a company that values the contribution of all team members and encourages professional growth," Casatelli explained. "The opportunities for advancement for women, all the way to senior management, really help to foster a positive company culture."

"It's amazing to look back at our company's 107-year history to note that our very first employee was a woman," Mariani-Hinman said, "and now women make up the majority of our workforce that keeps our company moving and growing."

"International Women's Day is a great way to highlight the real difference that women make across the world," Peck added. "Their achievements are inspiring, and I appreciate the chance to play a role in that through my work."

Marking the day

As a part of International Women's Day, the company launched an internal campaign, which promotes not only International Women's Day, but Women's History Month as well. The campaign encourages team members to share inspiring stories of women in their lives who have made an impact. Along with those internal activities, the company has created a social media campaign focused on inspirational women in history, communications to the more than 2,500 independent agents that represent the company, which promote International Women's Day and Women's History Month, including tools they can use to promote these important topics with their staff and customers.

About Utica National

Utica National Insurance Group is a nationally recognized group of insurers, providing personal and commercial insurance products and services, with the second-largest insurance agent errors and omissions business in the United States. The member companies of Utica National sell their products through more than 2,500 independent insurance agents and employ over 1,200 people countrywide. The lead insurance company of the group, Utica Mutual Insurance Company, was founded in 1914 and is headquartered in New Hartford, New York, with 11 offices.

Buttenschon hosts Women's History Month celebration

Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon, D-Marcy, is hosting a Women's History Month celebration for Mohawk Valley students.

Students are encouraged to create a drawing and/or write a few sentences that define a woman who inspires them. This can be someone in students' lives, a historical figure or a fictional character.

The celebration submission form is available at www.nyassembly.gov/Buttenschon and the submission deadline is Monday, March 29.

All submissions will debut in a video that will be released to the public.

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Izzo: "I didn't want to see myself being different..."

"Basketball is a very strategic sport. Coaching — at any level — that's a seven-days-a-week endeavor. You have to scout your opponent, you have to go out and play all those games and during those games, you have to make adjustments, and running a campaign is a lot like that," said Izzo. "You look at it strategically, plot it out and make a plan. We were very strategic because we had to deal with the (Republican) primary first. To be endorsed by the city Republican Committee over the incumbent mayor was a big step. To have the endorsement of the Republican Party, especially in Rome, means a lot. That in and of itself awarded us some (maybe) strategic advantages. You have to know the strengths and weakness of your opponents, and yourself, and in the end, you need to convince people you're the better candidate."

Izzo recalled being young and growing up in the midst of the Feminist Movement in the 60s and early 70s. But she said she never thought being a woman as something that could hold her back.

Being in elementary school or junior high at the time, "I didn't want to see myself being different because I'm a woman — why wouldn't I have the same opportunities as anyone else if I'm qualified?," she asked. "And after winning" the mayoral race, "I still think we ran a good campaign, and thought we had the best plan for Rome. And it's not just me. There has to be a lot of good people around me, and I'm appreciative that I have brought a lot of good people into the administration."

Izzo said, "We also had existing talent to help find our strengths and weaknesses, and we put them where they could do the best of their abilities. We've made tremendous progress. We wouldn't have done it without the group of dedicated people who were already there who all want the same things — a community to grow and to have more opportunities. They want their kids to have a good experience growing up and for them to be involved in activities" and then after high school and collage, "have jobs to come home to and raise a family here."

Izzo said she is proud that her main intention for running for mayor of Rome was to make sure her hometown would "start to move again — and we are."

"It's been an honor and it's humbling to serve in this position, and I hope to be making a difference," the mayor said. "Economic development and housing were two main things" in her campaign, "because we weren't capturing new residents, and a community can't grow from events, or sales tax, or quality of life without residents, and we needed them to be younger."

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