

# The 2023 Above & Beyond: Women Recognizing 50 remarkable women who are improving New York.



City & State, March 27, 2023

A decade ago, when City & State first published an Above & Beyond list of “25 incredible women,” New York had never had a female governor, a female attorney general or a female leader of a majority conference in the state Legislature. Some women had broken through, such as then-New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn – but as her tenure wound down in 2013, only 15 women won seats in the 51-member council. Women held other key posts too, notably U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, but most influential offices were held by men. Since then, the gender divide has become less out of balance. Gov. Kathy Hochul, state Attorney General Letitia James and state Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins are among the most powerful politicians in the state. Today, more than half of New York City Council members are women. Moreover, there have been similar breakthroughs and gains in the upper ranks of business, law, finance, academia and other areas that once were dominated by men.

City & State’s annual Above & Beyond: Women awards highlight 50 of these remarkable individuals, including outstanding executives, advocates, organizers and others whose accomplishments merit recognition on this exclusive list.

## **Andria Castellanos, Executive Vice President and Chief of Provider Services, VNS Health**

As the COVID-19 crisis unfolded in New York City, Andria Castellanos leaned on her more than three decades of leadership in health care to support her staff at VNS Health. She and her team hosted regular conference

calls where medical experts would bring employees up to speed on new developments in the organization and the medical field as a whole.

“We just kept the lines of communication open and continued to have a dialogue with our employees,” she says.

The pandemic was especially trying for VNS Health’s (formerly the Visiting Nurse Service of New York) approximately 10,000 employees, including those in the field caring for the city’s most vulnerable residents, as well as the operational support staff who keep the organization running. In addition to dealing with the fear of taking public transportation and caring for sick patients, employees saw some of their own colleagues die as a result of COVID-19.

This is why, Castellanos says, addressing concerns within a timely manner was a priority. “There were weeks where we got thousands of phone calls from our own employees who needed guidance on how to deal with their own illnesses,” she says.

Before joining VNS Health in 2018, Castellanos spent nearly 30 years in leadership positions in hospital operations for NewYork-Presbyterian, including at Milstein Hospital, Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital and the Allen Hospital.

“The experience that I had there really set me up to, I think, successfully be able to manage a situation like the pandemic,” she says.

*City & State New York is a weekly news magazine and website covering New York local and state politics and government. It reaches an audience of 211,179 through their magazine, website, and social media.*