



NEWS FROM  
**ULSTER COUNTY**  
County Executive Jen Metzger

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## **Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger Announces 2024 School Bus Driver of the Year and Charles Schaller Award Recipients**

**GALE BORDEN, SUE MILLER, TOM POLK, AND TROOPER JOSEPH LEGGIO RECOGNIZED FOR DEDICATION  
TO SERVICE AND SAFETY ON OUR ROADS**

**KINGSTON, NY** - Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger is pleased to announce that the 2024 Ulster County School Bus Driver of the Year Award winner is Gale Borden, a long-time school bus driver for the Onteora Central School District, and this year's recipient of the Charles Schaller Award is Tom Polk, who recently retired as the Coordinator of the Kingston YMCA Bicycle Program. Sue Miller, a bus driver for the New Paltz Central School District, received an Honorable Mention for School Bus Driver of the Year, and New York State Trooper Joseph Leggio received an Honorable Mention for the Charles Schaller Award.

The School Bus Driver of the Year Award recognizes drivers with exceptional service and safety records and is issued by the Ulster County Traffic Safety Board in conjunction with "Operation Safe Stop," a cooperative project in New York State that seeks to promote school bus safety through education and enforcement efforts.

"Congratulations to Gale Borden and Sue Miller for their dedication to service and school bus safety. We are grateful for their care, commitment, and professionalism, and for being exemplary models each and every school day in safely transporting children to and from school. Their jobs and those of the approximately 700 school bus drivers throughout Ulster County are so vitally important to the well-being of our children," **said County Executive Metzger**. "In addition, I want to thank our law enforcement community for their participation in Operation Safe Stop and their continued efforts to enforce stopped school bus laws, protect our children, and educate the public."

The County Executive also presented the Charles Schaller Award, an annual recognition of an individual who is dedicated, devoted, and committed to traffic safety. Charles Schaller, a champion of road safety, was the Ulster County Traffic Safety Coordinator for approximately ten years.

“Congratulations to Tom Polk, this year’s recipient of the Charles Schaller Award and to New York State Trooper Joseph Leggio for his Honorable Mention,” **said County Executive Metzger.** “Each of these individuals has made invaluable contributions in different ways — Tom, as a leader in bike safety who developed and oversaw innovative bike education and safety programs at the YMCA for 15 years, and Trooper Leggio, as the Dedicated Highway Traffic Enforcement Trooper in Kingston who made education an important component of his enforcement efforts.”

To honor those who are committed to ensuring traffic safety each day, a ceremony was held on Thursday, April 25 at the Ulster County Law Enforcement Center Rotunda. County Executive Metzger presented awards to the following winners:

**Gail Borden**, who received the Ulster County School Bus Driver of the Year Award, obtained her CDL in 1974 and has been driving in the Onteora CSD since then — 42 years total! She single-handedly raised three children while working multiple jobs, and has additionally helped organize donations to families in times of need, cooked delicious meals for the fire company, and served the community when thousands lost their homes during Hurricanes Irene and Lee. Borden is fondly remembered by all her students and continues to keep in touch with many of them. When asked about her lifetime of school bus driving experience, she remarked that she has loved every minute of it and has had a lot of laughs, a lot of tears and said a lot of prayers!

**Sue Miller**, who received an Honorable Mention for School Bus Driver of the Year, has been driving for the New Paltz Central School District for more than 20 years. On a daily basis, she demonstrates safety, kindness, respect and dedication to her students. Whether on her regular run, or filling in where needed, Miller stands out as a role model for other drivers. As an LPN, she remains updated on current health issues, offering the best care for special ed students requiring medical attention or monitoring. When she’s not driving a bus, Miller works with a local women's shelter as well as other community fundraisers collecting coats and other necessities for people in need.

**Tom Polk**, the 2024 Charles Schaller Awardee, has volunteered his time at the YMCA as a Bike Director and his programs are now a vibrant part of the YMCA community. He has dedicated over 15 years to further the awareness and education of safety for bike riders, pedestrians, and motorists, developing Bike Education and Bike Safety programming at the Kingston YMCA since 2009, often serving the community's most economically challenged populations. Thanks to his years of hard work: 1,738 pieces of safety equipment were distributed, 10 repair clinics were offered, more than 1,000 children received bike safety education and nine youth received bike mechanic repair training. Polk has since stepped away from his YMCA work, but not before making the program sustainable, by acquiring grants and securing his replacement.

**Trooper Joseph N. Leggio**, who received an Honorable Mention for the Charles Schaller Award, has been serving as a NYS Trooper since 2014. He began his career at the Ellenville State Police, and now serves in Kingston. Trooper Leggio is considered by his colleagues and supervising officers as an asset to his agency who conducts himself with professionalism and pride. In 2021, he became the Dedicated Highway Traffic Enforcement Trooper in Kingston, and since then has written more Uniform Traffic Tickets than any other member of the New York State Police — last year issuing nearly 3,500 traffic tickets. Trooper Leggio's approach to roadside encounters with traffic violators stresses dialogue and education with the motorist, highlighting the need for safety for both the driver and other users of the roadway.

The award ceremony on April 25 is held in conjunction with Operation Safe Stop, which seeks to promote school bus safety through education and enforcement efforts. During Safe Stop, police officers in marked and unmarked patrol units monitor selected bus routes that have a history of illegal passing complaints, and issue tickets to drivers who pass stopped school buses.

Operation Safe Stop is a cooperative project supported by the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, the New York State Education Department, the New York Association for Pupil Transportation, the New York State School Bus Contractors Association, the student transportation industry and state, county, city, and local law enforcement agencies. For more information, visit <https://trafficsafety.ny.gov/operation-safe-stop>.

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