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**Valerie Knoblauch Awarded Career and Lifetime Achievement Award**

*Finger Lakes Visitors Connection’s President and CEO Awarded for Excellence in Leadership*

**Canandaigua, N.Y. –** Finger Lakes Visitors Connection’s Valerie Knoblauch has been awarded the 2023 New York State Tourism Industry Association (NYSTIA) Excellence in Leadership: Career/Lifetime Achievement Award. NYSTIA is a state-wide association whose purpose is to advance the travel and tourism industry of New York. Knoblauch has been president of Ontario County’s tourism promotion agency since 1984 when the agency was formed to “raise the awareness level of Ontario County as a place to have people pursue their leisure time activities.” Ms. Knoblauch has led the tourism industry’s growth to a multi-million dollar revenue and jobs generator for Ontario County.

Knoblauch has held several hospitality industry leadership positions at the state and national level, including a current appointment to the New York State Tourism Advisory Council. She was a member of the US Travel Board of Directors – serving in leadership roles on multiple subcommittees, including the National Council of Area and Regional Tourism Organizations.

At the New York State level she stands as the only person to have served as Chairperson of the NYS Tourism Promotion Agency Council, the New York State Travel and Vacation Association – and the New York State Tourism Industry Association when those two organizations merged. Regionally she is a board member of the Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council, a cooperative marketing organization for all 14 counties.

Knoblauch is a recognized speaker across the country with her expertise noted in strategic planning, tourism as economic development, branding, community partnerships, and innovative marketing. Locally, she has been active and recognized as a former member of the Canandaigua City School District Board of Education, 2001 Athena Award, and as an active leader for other not-for-profits across the region.

Knoblauch said, “I am humbled by this honor. My career has been most rewarding as I was able to lead a growing tourism workforce, form cooperative partnerships, and inspire the passion for our ever developing products and communities.” She continued to share that she is most proud of growing the agency’s recognition as a major economic development driver and mentoring the next generation of leaders. She noted that she has mentored over 100 travel and tourism interns and part time workers during her nearly 40-year career at the tourism agency.

Knoblauch is a native to New York State’s Finger Lakes Region, having grown up in the Keuka Lake area and currently lives in Canandaigua with her husband, Kurt.

Knoblauch’s achievement will be celebrated at the 2023 Annual NYSTIA Meeting and Awards Ceremony on September 14 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Rochester, NY, along with other award-winning tourism professionals and programs.

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***About Finger Lakes Visitors Connection***

*Finger Lakes Visitors Connection is the tourism promotion and management agency for Ontario County. Its mission is to curate, distinguish, and develop Ontario County’s destination brand to inspire travel that creates economic vitality for our stakeholders and communities, and provides quality of life benefits for our residents. More information is available at* [*visitfingerlakes.com.*](https://www.visitfingerlakes.com/)

***About The New York State Tourism Industry Association***

*The New York State Tourism Industry Association (NYSTIA) is a member-driven, 501(c)6 nonprofit organization at the vanguard of transformational tourism marketing, stewardship and long-term strategic planning. We assist our members in advancing responsible economic growth, creating jobs, revitalizing communities, supporting small business success, and increasing state and local tax revenues in order to improve the standard of living, quality of life and pride of place for New York State communities and residents. We achieve these goals by facilitating the success of our members in realizing the economic potential of New York State's tourism industry as a catalyst for collaborative initiatives, exceptional marketing programs, industry research and legislative awareness for the private sector of New York State's tourism industry.* [*www.nystia.org*](https://d.docs.live.net/752e08be64d8a643/NYSTIA/2021%20RTE/www.nystia.org)