



# **YWCA Women of Distinction Winner / Robyne O'Mara**

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter  
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*This is one of a series of profiles on YWCA Women of Distinction Winners.*

ALTON - Robyne O'Mara retired almost five years ago, but she has not slowed down. Rather, it seems her life is busier now than ever.

For the past three years, she has served as a trained legal observer for the ACLU, getting called out to observe protests in the St. Louis area in order to ensure that the civil rights of protesters are not violated by police. Robyne is in her second year as a volunteer for the Interfaith Coalition for Latin America, accompanying undocumented asylum seekers to their monthly intensive supervision and ICE appointments, to ensure appropriate treatment.

Robyne was chosen as one of the YWCA's Women of Distinction winners for 2020.

Robyne volunteered at the YWCA of Alton for four years, and in the 1990s, spent four to five years as a facilitator for the Anti-Defamation League in St. Louis with their World of Difference (diversity awareness) program at schools and businesses. She currently works on campaigns for women running for office, is a site leader for the Alton Overnight Warming Shelter, and volunteers as a yoga instructor at Beverly Farms two to three times a month to anywhere between 5-20 residents each session. She travels to Springfield to lobby for issues important to women and keeping families and communities safe and sustainable, including clean energy, marriage equality, LGBTQ civil rights, the ERA, and reproductive health.

Robyne worked on the Poor People's Campaign in Illinois in 2018, traveling to Springfield each Monday that summer to protest on issues seeking to protect health care, the environment, social justice, and criminal justice. Issues that directly impact disenfranchised communities.

In her work life, she was able to turn a low income, non-diverse job situation for the women she supervised, into a better paying job, with opportunities for advancement. She increased diversity in hiring. She mentored several women, managing their work assignments and encouraging them so they could continue working while going back to school. They graduated as registered nurses, medical laboratory technologists, and one radiology technician.

To purchase tickets to the Alton YWCA Women of Distinction Banquet set for 6 p.m. Sept. 17 at the Best Western Premier.

Tickets and Infomation can be found here: <https://www.altonywca.com/blog/event/women-of-distinction/>