



# **YWCA Women of Distinction Winner / Virginia Woulfe-Beile**

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter  
June 11 2020 10:22 AM



*This is one of a series of profiles on YWCA Women of Distinction Winners.*

ALTON - Much of Virginia Woulfe-Beile's current work with the Sierra Club involves environmental issues, she has combined her knowledge of environmental issues and her training in racial justice issues to educate groups in the metro-east about the connection between environmental justice and racism.

Virginia was recently named a Women of Distinction winners.

Virginia received community organizing training through Gamaliel of Illinois. She gives presentations at public meetings to raise awareness of the disproportionate impact of pollution on communities of color. When Veolia announced its plans to do away with heavy metal testing requirements at its incinerator in East St. Louis, Virginia and other members of the United Congregations of Metro East (UCM), of which she is an active member, organized an action at a public comment meeting, turning out so many people they had to move to a larger room.

Her work on Illinois clean energy policy focuses on climate justice and jobs for the poor and communities of color, communities that are most impacted by coal combustion, and environmental degradation.

Virginia serves on the Village of Godfrey Board of Trustees to raise up women in local government. She chairs the Energy Efficiency and Climate Protection Committee which brings focus to equitable access to renewable energy for all. She also serves on the Godfrey Stormwater Committee to help give voice to residents suffering financial and health impacts from increased stormwater erosion and flooding in their homes and businesses.

Virginia has created programs that provide young women of color access to nature by coordinating and leading trips to local nature centers and hiking venues. Her work with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Pere Marquette Park Preservation Project engages with AmeriCorps YouthBuild program which provides High School Equivalency Certificates and job training for at-risk youth by restoring historic CCC Group Camps in Pere Marquette Park. She works to provide young women with paid internships through community organizations working with the Sierra Club. Working with UCM, she worked to pass "Ban the Box" legislation which bars certain types of employers from inquiring about a job applicant's past criminal history, completed training which focuses on building power to break down racial barriers and social injustice, and has provided education on dismantling the school to prison pipeline.

Her collaboration with American Bottoms Conservancy and the Sierra Club helped to secure \$800,000 in grants for Riverbend Head Start to fund indoor air quality improvements at the Granite City Campus. She and her colleague also present "Eating a Rainbow" nutrition program to Head Start early childhood students and their families.

Virginia has volunteered with the YWCA of Alton summer camp programs to create an organic vegetable garden and sponsored children at the Two Rivers Wildlife Refuge Camp. She is also an active member of Rotary of the Riverbend, Alton Main Street, Riverbender Community Center, Metro East Green Alliance, Alton Overnight Warming Centers, and numerous other community organizations.

The Alton YWCA Women of Distinction Banquet is set for 6 p.m. on September 17 at the Best Western Premier.

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