



# **2024 Women of Distinction: Teresa Howard-Johnson Empowers Teen Parents**

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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ALTON - Since she was a teenager, Teresa Howard-Johnson has been dedicated to helping other teenage mothers. Over 40 years later, she will be recognized for her efforts.

Howard-Johnson, one of the YWCA's ten 2024 Women of Distinction, will be honored at the Y's annual gala for her commitment to the community. She is passionate about children from birth to young adulthood, and she does a lot to help young mothers feel empowered to be the best parents they can.

"I was a teenage single mother at the age of 16, and I was at Alton High, and back then I didn't realize that God was going to put me on a journey to become a founder of an organization," she said. "It has been rewarding. I didn't know when I got pregnant and had my baby at 16 that 43 years later this is what I would be doing, but I wouldn't have it any other way."

Howard-Johnson founded [Chariti Home Ministries](#), spelled with an "i" because every girl she works with is an individual. The organization serves teenage parents across Madison and St. Clair counties, including those in the Alton Community Unit School District #11.

"People like to stereotype young girls when they get pregnant, but I've talked to over 700 girls, and each one has a unique story," Howard-Johnson said. "My big thing is empowering them to work in their community and to be successful, nurturing, loving, caring mothers."

In order to combat stereotypes and add to people's understanding of teenage pregnancy, Howard-Johnson recently published a book titled "The Gift: The Chronicles of a Former Teenage Mother." While Chariti Home Ministries is her main passion, she has also worked with the Girl Scouts of America, Boys and Girls Club of America, Salvation Army, Christian Women United, Chestnut Health Systems Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition, Racial Harmony and several other organizations. She was employed as a nurse throughout her entire career.

For those who want to give back like Howard-Johnson but aren't sure where to start, she has some compelling advice.

"What I would tell them is to really, really see what bothers them, what is a burden on their heart," she explained. "And then Google is the best thing in the world. Just start Googling...and then go do it. As Nike says, just do it."

Congratulations to Teresa Howard-Johnson on this recognition!

*This is the third in a series of articles about the ten 2024 Women of Distinction. For more information about the YWCA's Women of Distinction Gala, visit the [official Facebook event page](#).*