



2024 Women of Distinction: Annette Campbell Returns to Alton, Helps Youth and Unhoused Folks

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - Annette Campbell loves her hometown. After spending most of her adult life in California, her return to Alton has been a tour of service.

Campbell, 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 explained that she tries to help youth and unhoused people through her involvement in several local organizations.

"I love this place. I see a lot that's missing, but I still love it," she said. "Having the ability to fill some of those spaces, that makes my heart glad."

Campbell keeps clothing, toothbrushes and toothpaste in her car so she can distribute care packages to unhoused community members. She was heavily involved in homeless initiatives in California, and she quickly found ways to give back when she returned to Illinois. She started at a food bank and began to meet people in different organizations around the community, and they helped her connect to other local groups.

Currently, Campbell is excited to be part of a new youth program that will cater to kids ages 13–23. The program will teach life skills, like knitting, gardening and mechanics, while also encouraging the kids to pursue their own interests and goals.

"We want to help them to learn more about their passion and also teach them some other necessities of life," she explained. "Especially since there's been a lot of fighting at the high schools and stuff, we want to give them the tools that they need so they don't have to do that and understand how to navigate their way and even about conflict resolution, so that they won't be afraid to say, 'Let's talk about it. Let's not fight. Let's not shoot. Let's just go somewhere and have a conversation' to get over whatever they're feeling so that they don't resort to retaliation."

This new program will hopefully begin in May, Campbell said. She hopes it will allow young people to get involved in their community and learn more about the world around them and the strengths within them.

"We want to bring them into an environment where they feel safe to be who they are, to dream. Because we come here dreaming, but then it gets lost along the way and we get programmed to do or be what somebody else wants us to be," she explained. "So we want to get back to that with them and help them to understand that there are so many things that you could learn to do."

For people who want to help in their community but aren't sure where to start, Campbell encourages them to think about who they are and what passions they have. From there, she suggests joining groups that align with those passions. She believes in helping other people as much as she can.

"Sometimes you experience things in your own life and that prompts you to want to do something to better a situation," she said. "If a person doesn't have a jacket or spare

socks, shoes, food to eat — I think we are supposed to be making sure that if we can help, we do.”

Congratulations to Annette Campbell on this recognition!

This is the eighth 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](#).