



# **2024 Women of Distinction: Kristen Burns Helps in Wood River and Beyond**

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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ALTON - Kristen Burns is known as the Marketing and Public Relations consultant for the City of Wood River, but her service goes way beyond her day job.

Burns, 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. From assisting entrepreneurs at her job to riding her bike for law enforcement in her free time, Burns stays busy helping others.

"I really do lots of different things. Basically, if there's a volunteer opportunity in the city, I'm working towards helping out with that," she said. "I just have passions for lots of different things, so I make sure that I do those things."

Burns is the vice president of the Wood River Business Alliance, and she often guides entrepreneurs through creating their business. This also helps Wood River's downtown revitalization effort, which Burns is passionate about. She cares a lot about helping her hometown to thrive.

"I bring in new entrepreneurs from the very beginning that have a dream, have an idea, and give them the opportunity to work towards that dream, find them funding, find them a business plan, work, all of that so we can get them into a brick and mortar and fill our downtown," she explained. "So not only helping them out by achieving their dreams, but also helping the city out by helping our economic growth."

Burns also volunteers with the Wood River Public Library Foundation and the local school board. She teaches swimming lessons and coaches a swim team.

She shared that her brother-in-law was a police officer who was killed in the line of duty. Burns and her husband, who is also a police officer, often work with Mustache March 4 PD and other organizations to support law enforcement.

Burns regularly participates in the Cycle Across Illinois fundraiser for the Illinois Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS). She rides her bike 368 miles across Illinois every summer to raise awareness and money for the organization.

She noted that it is "surreal" to be recognized for her work in the community and she is honored to be a part of the YWCA's ten Women of Distinction. For people who want to get involved but aren't sure where to start, she encourages them to talk to people about where there is a need and see where these conversations take them.

"I just started talking to different people and seeing where I can help. I knew that the talents that I had could help different places," she said. "So really, communication is key, and just getting to know people. Start small. If you have kids in school and you want to be more involved, ask their teacher and see where you can go from there...Communicate, talk to people, talk to everybody, because there's always an opportunity for you to volunteer with something."

Congratulations to Kristen Burns on this recognition!

*This is the ninth 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](#).*