

# **2024 Women of Distinction: Shanyra Cox Helps Kids Access Support**

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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ALTON - As an educator and parent, Shanyra Cox has always cared about kids. But her work in the Edwardsville Community Unit School District #7 sets her apart as a compassionate community member.

Cox, 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 works with bilingual students and students with special needs. Cox helps them access the resources and programs available to them.

“Helping out those babies, that’s the biggest thing. Just making sure our children have what they need so they can be productive members of society,” she said. “My babies at home have what they need, but there’s so many that don’t. Who’s going to be that voice for them?”

Cox helps bilingual students go to the doctor, secure medical insurance, find local food pantries and access other resources like rent assistance. She said there is often a communication barrier, so she helps students navigate these challenges so they can get the support they need.

Cox’s own children also inspire her. Her 7-year-old son is on the autism spectrum, which has ignited her passion for helping kids with special needs. She often advocates for students within the school, and she is also working with local law enforcement to plan a day where kids can meet police officers and firefighters. During this event, they will also register kids so first responders will know the kids have special needs and what those needs are.

“I’m really passionate about helping our special needs population as well as getting that equity and inclusion for all students,” she said. “I am big into racial and social justice, so I’m the Southern Illinois Regional Ethnic Minority Rep for Social Justice with our Illinois Education Association, and just trying to get more initiatives to bring awareness and justice for all of our babies.”

For people who want to start helping in the community, Cox has some advice. She encourages people to “start small” and let their interests show them the way.

“Reach out to your local communities, see where the need is, find where your passion is. Once you find where your passion is, I think that helps to guide you,” she said. “The biggest thing I remember, one of my biggest mentors said, if you don’t do it, who will? And so that was my driving force. Just start small, find your passion, and everything else will fall into place.”

Congratulations to Shanyra Cox on this recognition!

*This is the seventh 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](#).*

