



2016 YWCA Woman of Distinction: Shannon Kendrick



We are proud to announce that our hard-charging District Director, Shannon Kendrick, will soon be recognized as one of YWCA's 2016 Women of Distinction! Shannon is receiving this honor for her leadership, professional achievements, volunteer efforts, and civic involvement in Hampton Roads. If you have ever had the opportunity to meet Shannon, you understand why she's been selected for this distinction – she's AWESOME!

We peppered Shannon with questions about her achievement, and we share highlights of her answers here:

Q: How did you feel when you found out you were receiving the award?

A: I felt honored and overwhelmed with appreciation for the recognition from this prestigious organization.

Q: You were given this distinction based on your work with Congressman Rigell as well as your individual volunteer efforts. Could you tell us about your work and what you do specifically?

A: I truly enjoy my job of representing Congressman Rigell in Virginia's 2nd Congressional District. For over five years, I have been responsible for managing all district operations. My work for Rep. Rigell involves outreach to the region. I meet with representatives of community NGO's, local government, business organizations and constituents who want their concerns conveyed to the Congressman. I have also developed several advisory boards. I monitor the current trends in our region, and I consistently engage community leaders for input. I participate in community events, meetings and initiatives. I oversee our team in providing exceptional constituent service to those who experience challenges with federal departments and agencies.

Outside of my work with Congressman Scott Rigell, I volunteer on various boards in the community. I serve on the boards of the following organizations: The Virginia Beach African American Cultural Center Development, Norfolk

Sister Cities Association, Tidewater Boy Scouts of America, and Urban League of Hampton Roads. In addition to my board service, I mentor several young professional women, as well as young girls through The Links Incorporated and Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

With regard to politics, I have a desire to utilize my experience to help the community understand how to make government work for them and encourage strong collaboration between the two entities. I believe it is important to bring local politics closer to the people, and the community closer to its leaders and aspiring leaders. Therefore, in September of 2012, I co-founded the Hampton Roads Black Caucus (HRBC). My heart in starting HRBC was to empower all people. "Empowering the voices, bridging communities, and impacting the legislative process" is the organization's dictum. This organization also recognizes citizens who make a tremendous impact in the community by awarding the "HRBC Impact Award." We have supported and acknowledged individuals who have demonstrated support for black-owned business growth, economic development, educational advancement and community development regardless of race or political party.

Q: As a woman in politics, who also holds an MBA, what have you learned throughout your career?

A: I have learned that it is important to maximize every opportunity, and with each opportunity do your best to perform with a spirit of excellence. I have also learned that we did not arrive at where we are on our own. Somewhere along the way, someone took a chance and gave us an opportunity. Therefore, it is our duty, as leaders with influence in business and government, to do all that we can to create an environment rich with opportunity for others. When we give back and "pay it forward," others will also have a chance to demonstrate their ability and do their part to make an impact in their sphere of influence. Finally, it's NEVER about ourselves; we are but small vapors on the earth. It's about what we can do to make a difference while we are here.

Q: The YWCA says that recipients of their "Women of Distinction" awards "exhibit a dedication to our mission of eliminating racism and empowering women." In your opinion, what progress has our nation made to achieve this goal?

A: Our country has progressed in the areas of eliminating racism and empowering women through opportunities in education and professional advancement. Today, more minorities are graduating from college and more women are holding prominent executive positions in companies. Nonetheless, I believe there is still an opportunity for more progress to be made, especially in the areas of public office representation and the criminal justice system.

Q: What are some of the most inspiring and best ways to empower young women? What advice would you give to young girls who dream of owning their own business, running for public office, or getting an advanced degree?

A: A dream is only a dream until you believe; all things are possible to them that believe. Even if you have to get to your goal one step at a time, each step in the right direction will carry you to that destination. The pathway to achieving success in any area of life is revealed with each choice we make; if you can't do anything else, make wise choices. Each smart and best choice will eventually lead you to where you want to be in life. Finally, as a Christian, I believe that we can do ALL things, impossible things, through Christ who strengthens us.

I would also tell young girls that they must develop a thick skin if they are interested in pursuing a life of public service. Life in the public eye includes a life of public judgment by people you know, individuals who assume they know you, and people who don't know you at all. It is important to always have people in your life who know you best, accept you, and are going in the same direction you want to go. You need this support system in your life. These are the people who will uplift, strengthen, and encourage you when you need it most.

Q: Any other thoughts or comments you would like to share?

A: I will always work for the cause of empowering others, especially women. Women are amazing forces of nature! When a woman aims for her dream and reaches it, it lifts us all. Because life has its challenges for us, it's important that we always take the time to uplift and celebrate each other's accomplishments. As women, we have achieved much, but there are still so many more barriers we can break, problems we can solve, and dreams we can achieve. We love and need our men, but there is something so special and unique about GIRL POWER!