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Mayor Pro-Tem Honored as a Woman of Distinction

Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke has been named a "Woman of Distinction" by Assemblyman Jose Medina and will be honored in a ceremony March 21 at the Riverside Convention Center.

"I am truly honored and blessed to be considered for this award," Burke said. "It's a great honor to receive this recognition."



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke will receive a Woman of Distinction Award from Assemblyman Jose Medina later this month. Here is a press release about Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke receiving a Woman of Distinction Award later this month.

In a press release from Medina's office in Riverside, the Assemblyman said Burke and other women receiving the upcoming honor were recognized for making made "significant contributions to our community and specifically have served as a role model and mentor for the young women in our district."

Medina outlined some of Burke's qualifications and accomplishments.

In early 2014, Burke was appointed president of Run Women Run Inland Empire Chapter, an organization that recruits, inspires, trains and encourages women to run for public office and seek appointments.

After her own successful political campaign, she was elected to the Perris city council in November 2014. In January, Burke was elected to serve as a Delegate to the California Democratic Party, representing the 61st Assembly District.

Burke received her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz, a master's degree in clinical psychology from Pepperdine University and is pursuing a doctorate in organizational psychology from Walden University. Her dissertation research focuses on cyberbullying within the workplace.

She currently is employed as a senior vocational counselor with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). She began her tenure with DOR in 2005, working throughout Los Angeles County and later transferred to the Inland Empire area. Burke works with teens/adults with disabilities - including veterans. She has assisted hundreds in their pursuit to obtain employment

Burke has held membership and several leadership positions within various organizations, including United Employees of the State of California (UESC); American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. (AKA); American Psychological Association (APA); Association of Black Psychologists (ABP); Black Voice Magazine (Santa Cruz); Boys and Girls Club; Coalition for Mental Health Professionals; Emily's List; PTO/PTA; School Site Council; Santa Cruz County Suicide Prevention; Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychologist (SIOP); National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); and Third World and Native American Society Press (TWNAS).

Following her election to the Perris City Council in November, Burke said she wanted to focus on improving the City's economic growth (business development and capitalization on untapped/underutilized revenues), promoting and increasing access to higher education and skills training (job creation/retention and employment promotion), improving the City's efficiency and increasing transparency.

Burke said her professional and personal life has been characterized by her commitment to making her community a better place to live, work, shop, play and raise a family. Tonya is actively involved within her community and beyond. She founded Operation Well and Fit Communities, a movement geared towards providing physical, mental and spiritual wellness education/workshops, advocacy and resources to the residents within the Inland Empire.

"When you do things in and for your community, you don't do it to receive awards," she said. "You feel like you are doing what you're supposed to be doing."

She resides with her family in Perris and enjoys spending time with her husband Jason and three children (Devon 20, Brianna 17, and Jaylyn 12), attending Crossword Christian Church, teaching Zumba and reading.

Four other Perris-area women also will receive Women of Distinction Awards. Those include:

- Yolanda Williams, a board member for the Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce. Williams is founder and chairwoman of the Inland Empire Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association whose mission is to honor and promote the legacy of the 18 Medals of Honor awarded to the 9th and 10th all-black Buffalo Soldiers Cavalry and the 24th Infantry Regiment.
- Isabel Coronel, who for the last 25 years has worked with the organization Training Occupational Development Educating Communities (TODEC) as an organizer and activist.
- Sally Myers, who 23 years ago organized her High School Student of the Month Recognition and Scholarship Program. The program honors students who make a difference through their character, passion and persevered through challenging life circumstances in Temecula, Murrieta, Lake Elsinore, Wildomar, Canyon Lake and Perris/Menifee.
- Lovella Singer, executive director of the Dora Nelson African-American Art and History Museum in Perris. The museum's mission is to collect, document and preserve the history of African Americans in the Perris Valley through photographs, oral histories and artifacts.

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