

Presenter: Conchita Robinson

Award: NONPROFIT

Recipient: Kathy Colbenson – CHRIS Kids

Reading the nominations is inspiring and fun – making the decisions is decidedly not. That was especially true in the nonprofit category – there were ten nominees who are all making a difference in our city and in our world. Two of the nominees got **more** than two nominations – and one – our winner - received FOUR nominations and FIVE letters of support.

That nominee is Kathy Colbenson ---- the CEO of CHRISkids. Kathy leads an organization that has been successful in spite of difficult times, and when you read the nominations you understand why. She is a picture-perfect example of the Leadership Character Model – humble, trustworthy, and determined to do whatever it takes - whatever it takes to make the world a better place for our most vulnerable children.

CHRISkids serves children in the foster care system with mental health needs, and operates eight group homes. The children in these homes have had an average of seven prior foster placements and are on an average of 2.3 medications for severe mental health problems. As Kathy has said, this is not easy work, but it couldn't be more important.

CHRIS is an acronym – it stands for Creativity, Honor, Respect, Integrity, and Safety. Those values are modeled by Kathy. They guide all the work of the organization and they guide her leadership, and they are perfectly aligned with the Leadership Character Model.

Her nominators all praised her integrity – the “I” in CHRIS. From one, “She does the right thing because it’s the right thing to do... not because someone is watching.” From another – “She holds everyone – including clients, staff, the board, and suppliers – to the standard of doing what’s right, not what’s easy.”

Kathy also lives the “R” in CHRIS – Respect. According to her nominators, she “treats ALL people with kindness” and “seeks feedback from all levels of staff.” She also listens to kids in a way that is transformational, and balances respect for others with a willingness hold them accountable in a way that is unmatched.

But her Responsibility may be her biggest strength. She is confident, always accountable, and courageous. You can see that from what she has accomplished. From her nominators – “Kathy Colbenson gets things done, no matter how big the challenge.” Kathy is an innovator, initiating many programs that have become best-practice models. “CHRISkids has won the Managing for Excellence Award from the Community Foundation - TWICE.” And finally - “She sees it as her ‘**responsibility**’ to make the world a better place.”

Believe me, the world is a better place because of Kathy Colbenson. Join me in congratulating Kathy as our 2013 Leadership Character Award recipient in the Non Profit category.