



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WINGS Wins Two National Purple Ribbon Awards for Executive of the Year and Outstanding Fundraising Event

Chicago (July 8th, 2024) – DomesticShelters.Org has named WINGS President & CEO Rebecca Darr as Executive of the Year and WINGS annual Sweet Home Chicago event has won Outstanding Fundraising Event in its national Purple Ribbon Awards.

The Purple Ribbon Awards are the first comprehensive awards program honoring the countless heroes of the domestic violence movement: advocates, shelters, survivors, and more. Winners include entries from the United States and Canada. Entries were judged based on the size of a nominee's organization within each category.

Winning entries receive a certificate and official Purple Ribbon Award medallion. All winners were recognized at a virtual celebration on June 13th, 2024.

Rebecca Darr Wins Executive of the Year

This year, Rebecca Darr is celebrating her 25th year as leader of WINGS Program, Inc. Growing WINGS budget from \$350,000 to over \$12 million, Rebecca has led WINGS through several expansions in programming: opening two Safe Houses, pioneering a Survivor Lifeline Mentoring program, launching WINGS Resale operations, cultivating partnerships with hospitals, and expanding housing options for clients. A collaborative thought leader, Rebecca has served in leadership positions for multiple coalitions.

*“Rebecca’s leadership over the last 25 years has driven WINGS to be the amazing organization it is today. The heart and passion that Rebecca has dedicated to WINGS mission has had **a tremendous impact that I am truly in awe of.** The execution of her vision has made a difference in the lives of many, **turning vulnerability into hope,***

strength, and confidence. *It is exciting to witness Rebecca's vision continue to evolve as WINGS continues to grow,"* WINGS Board Chair, Elaine Sambo-Reyther shares.

In honor of Rebecca's 25th Anniversary, WINGS is hosting monthly parties throughout the communities the agency serves to share the program's history, growth, and raise funds in Rebecca's honor. The next event will be July 25th in Rolling Meadows. Details can be found at: <https://wingsprogram.com/upcoming-event/rebeccas-25th-anniversary-celebration/>.

WINGS Sweet Home Chicago Wins Outstanding Fundraising Event

This past December, WINGS celebrated the 20th anniversary of its Sweet Home Chicago fundraising event. The family-friendly, holiday-themed event was held on December 10, 2023, at the Four Seasons Chicago, raising over \$700,000 for WINGS programs, including shelter, programs, and services for survivors of domestic violence. Co-chaired by Katherine Banich, Meghan Norton, and Maria Shideler, over 430 people attended the event, including 225 children.

This year's event had a special theme "Elf," as the popular holiday film also celebrated its 20-year anniversary. Buddy the Elf was present at the event, bringing smiles to both adults and children. Families decorated gingerbread houses to symbolize the importance of safe shelter. Attendees enjoyed a delicious brunch, visiting with Santa and Mrs. Claus, and making holiday ornaments. K-9 Comfort Dogs from Lutheran Church Charities and balloon artists were on-site to bring more holiday cheer and comfort. Each child received a plush Comfort Dog toy. Ralph's World entertained families with special live music.

Since the event began in 2004, it has raised more than \$13.1 million in contributions for WINGS. Sweet Home Chicago was originally envisioned by Sheila King, a member of WINGS Metro Leadership Council and WINGS-AND Leadership Council. Sheila continues to serve on the Sweet Home Chicago Event Host Committee. John and Rita Canning are recognized for leading fundraising efforts.

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ABOUT WINGS PROGRAM, INC.

The mission of WINGS Program, Inc. is to provide housing, integrated services, education, and advocacy to end domestic violence. With nearly 40 years of experience, WINGS is a premier provider and leading expert in the field of direct service domestic violence solutions.

As the largest domestic violence agency in Illinois, WINGS creates and implements high-quality, client-centered, domestic violence programs for survivors of all ages, ethnicities, and gender identities. The agency's housing programs have provided over one million nights of safe housing in well-maintained facilities. WINGS Community Based Services are innovative and scalable. WINGS Children and Family Services program provides critical interventions for youth to end the cycle of violence.

Anyone experiencing domestic violence can receive help by calling the 24-hour hotline at 847.221.5680. Survivors interested in learning more about WINGS counseling services may call 847.519.7828. For more information, visit www.wingsprogram.com.



WINGS staff gather to celebrate WINGS two new Purple Ribbon Awards.



WINGS President & CEO Rebecca Darr holds up the Domestic Shelter Award for Executive of the Year.



Buddy the Elf and Santa at WINGS 20th Annual Sweet Home Chicago Fundraiser.