

OFFICE OF FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES



Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., *Governor* • Isaac E. Randolph Jr., *Executive Director*

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information contact:

Suzette Foster
(317) 233-0902
sfoster@ofbci.in.gov

Indianapolis Resident Receives Governor's Award For Service Learning

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (October 27, 2009) Through creative programming and partnerships, and a supportive volunteer staff, Gayle Hutchens maintains an organization that meets the needs of at-risk youth and provides a rescue shelter for at-risk dogs. As the executive director of Paws and Think, Hutchens' volunteers touch the lives of many. It is because of this commitment to changing the lives of canines and young people, that Hutchens will receive the Governor's Award for Service Learning.

The Governor's Awards for Volunteer Service are Indiana's most prestigious awards celebrating the accomplishments of dedicated volunteers and practitioners from across the State. An individual is nominated in each of the seven categories of service-learning, community service, youth, faith-based, government service, national service and lifetime achievement.

As this year's recipient, Hutchens will be honored at the 6th Annual Governor's Conference on Service and Volunteerism in Indianapolis on October 29th, during a special luncheon ceremony. This year's awards will be presented by Miss America, Katie Stam, a resident of Seymour Indiana, and First Lady Cheri Daniels, wife of Governor Mitch Daniels.

As a mostly volunteer organization, Paws and Think coaches at-risk youth on how to train dogs from shelters in order to increase their adoption rate and prevent euthanasia. As a result of the training, dogs that demonstrate exceptional abilities are further trained as service dogs, assisting individuals with disabilities and special needs. Through their efforts, Hutchens and her team have shaped the lives of over 3,000 at-risk youths, and approximately 300 dogs have been spared from euthanasia with 18 dogs being placed with individuals with special needs or disabilities; increasing their independence and social integration in our communities.

Hutchens is no stranger to building partnerships and providing service to the community. As previous director of five nursing units at Clarian Health, she left her career to start Paws and Think and support husband who was diagnosed with Parkinson's. In her eight years of serving as

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302 West Washington Street, Room E012
Indiana Government Center, South Complex
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
Tel: (317) 233-4273
Fax: (317) 233-5660
www.IN.gov/ofbci

the head of the organization, she has yet to be paid salary for her sometimes 40-60 hours per week of service.

Hutchens volunteerism and recognition is not just limited her work with Paws and Think. Hutchens is a member of Carl Brizzi's Mentoring Task Force, the Animal Welfare Summit, the Assistance Dog United Campaign, and has received the Mayor's award for community service, the L'Oreal Paris Women of Worth award, the Jefferson award, and was recognized for her leadership, creativity and community service through the RTV Leadership award.

"The creative partnerships that Gayle has developed saves valuable resources for all partnering agencies," notes John Vernon Oaks who nominated Hutchens for the award. "The four programs of Paws and Think provide a Win, Win, Win, Win for at risk-youth, shelter/rescue dogs at-risk of euthanasia, children and adults with disabilities, and our communities."

Hutchens will join six other award recipients being recognized for their commitment to civic engagement at the luncheon. "Generations of Hoosiers have been contributing to their communities. There is never a task too great or a job too small. As I travel our state, I am constantly reminded of the positive impact that volunteers make on the quality of life for our neighbors," said Governor Mitch Daniels.

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The Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives promotes service and volunteerism in the State of Indiana. Working together with other government agencies, AmeriCorps*State programs, volunteer centers, and faith-based and community organizations, the OFBCI helps Hoosiers to develop and implement solutions in their own communities.
