

Children International Names 2014 Inspire Award™ Finalists

Kansas City, MO, December 1, 2014 /3BL Media/ - Children International has named the finalists for the 2014 Inspire Award™. These finalists have each been selected as winners in their region in order to be considered for this honor. The unique Children International Inspire Award™ celebrates outstanding contributions of volunteers who live in and are a part of the impoverished communities Children International serves. More than 8,000 dedicated volunteers help make Children International's work possible, using their time and energy to enhance the lives of children in their communities. This year's finalists have:

- fought to educate their communities on issues like human-trafficking and child marriage
- led environmental-protection campaigns
- campaigned and fundraised for community-improvement projects, such as having their streets paved.

The finalists for the 2014 Inspire Award™ are:

Miriam Castilla Lara, Barranquilla, Colombia

Miriam Castilla Lara convinced the city's mayor to include her neighborhood in the program "Barrios a la Obra," a project to pave roads in Barranquilla. Thanks to her efforts, the neighborhood now has good access to roads, which has significantly improved the quality of life for local residents. Additionally, Ms. Castilla Lara has been involved in several volunteer activities for Children International, including informing the community about important events, collecting letters to sponsors from the children in the sector of which she is in charge, advising families and assisting with gift distributions. She also teaches life skills to 20 beneficiaries in Children International's Sports for Development program. She was also honored for her leadership capabilities; in addition to her work with CI, she serves as the "Secretaria de la Comuna" in her neighborhood.

Diana Guerrero, Cartagena, Colombia

Diana Guerrero was a pioneer for Children International's Community-Feeding program when it began in her community. She volunteers in Sponsorship Relations and also assists with health-related activities. Currently, she is a volunteer in Children International's Nutrition Rehabilitation program, where she prepares lunch for children who are underweight. Over the last several years, Ms. Guerrero has proven herself to be a leader who takes initiative. For example, she noticed that few organized sports activities were available to local children and youth, so she began organizing indoor soccer tournaments for her community. When she saw local sewage problems going unfixed, she gathered her community, started a petition and solved the ongoing problem. Because of the love and compassion she offers to sponsored children, youth and parents, community residents feel very comfortable around her and say they enjoy participating with her on projects.

Elsa Buch Sik, Guatemala City, Guatemala

Elsa Buch Sik, or Mrs. Elsita as she is known by those in her community, was one of the first volunteers to get youth in her area involved in Children International's Into Employment program, which prepares youth to enter the job market with valuable skills that help them find employment. She works in Sponsor Relations and supports general Children International program activities. One of her roles as a volunteer is to inform youth of the different opportunities available to them, such as Into Employment. Additionally, she helps with tasks such as updating child records, letter writing, distributing gifts and following up with families after natural disasters.

Alexandra Cirino, Guayaquil, Ecuador

When she saw that youth participation in her area was declining, Alexandra Cirino took initiative and put together an information stand to inform youth about Children International's youth programs and why they should participate. As a volunteer for Children International, her duties include collecting letters

from children to their sponsors, distributing benefits and conducting home visits. In Guayaquil, Children International staff, volunteers, parents, children and youth supported and confirmed Ms. Cirino as a dedicated, hardworking volunteer who has helped better their community. She has also inspired others in her community to get involved and volunteer alongside her.

Leticia M. Galvez, Legazpi, Philippines

Leticia M. Galvez served as the secretary and chairman of the education program in her community center, where she took the lead in coordinating and disseminating information among sponsored families related to educational assistance. She has been a Children International volunteer since 1990 and is currently involved in helping children write letters to their sponsors, updating family records and helping with gift distributions. Ms. Galvez also shares information related to Children International's feeding program with families who could benefit from it.

Enrique Antonio Tango, Manila, Philippines

In 2009, Enrique "Ricky" Tango joined a rug-weaving training project funded by a donation from a Children International sponsor. While taking part in the training project, his leadership capabilities became evident, and the group selected him to be their coordinator. Under his leadership, the project went from a fledgling group whose membership fluctuated between 10 and 15 people producing 100 doormats a week to a solid force of 20 regular craft workers, weaving components for high-end bags and fashion accessories. Each member now has a savings account and is covered by insurance. Additionally, Mr. Tango completes a variety of tasks for Children International as a volunteer, including children's letter writing, disseminating program information, assisting during gift distributions and helping register new children in the sponsorship program.

Jenny Frutos, Quito, Ecuador

In her sector, Jenny Frutos is in charge of encouraging children and young adults to take advantage of the CI programs available. Thanks to her encouragement, attendance is high for CI's financial and social education program. Additionally, she became a teacher for health and nutrition education and gives personalized talks to parents on how to better their eating habits. As a side project, she also helped establish a community garden, encouraging other local women to participate. Out of the 14 gardens created as part of the Family Gardens project in Quito, Ms. Frutos' garden was the best garden in volume of production and had the highest number of participants. Overall, Ms. Frutos is an active volunteer in Children International's health and education programs, and she also helps the organization facilitate communication with children and their families.

Lea Ventura, Quezon City, Philippines

Lea Ventura is a letter-writing volunteer with Children International. Because of her, sponsored children realize the value of communicating with their sponsors and, as a result, greatly improve their writing skills. Additionally, Ms. Ventura is a volunteer coordinator for one of Quezon City's councilors, where part of her role is to help conduct free livelihood programs to better the lives of residents in her community. She also serves with her husband as a barangay (neighborhood) peace and security officer to make sure children are in their homes late at night when it can be unsafe for them to be out unsupervised.

Bappa Biswas, Kolkata, India

Bappa Biswas, nicknamed Bapi, is a former Children International sponsored child who is now inspiring others. Coming from a dalit community (the designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as lower-class outcasts), someone like Mr. Biswas is often to be ignored and ostracized by society, with minimal opportunities for earning a living (typically offered only menial and low-paying jobs) and with little hope for completing an education. But he overcame such obstacles and is currently pursuing a master's degree. As a volunteer for Children International, Mr. Biswas mentors youth, helps with gift distributions and advises youth council groups on their community projects. Additionally, he is very involved in his community with sharing action-oriented programs with school students and parents' groups on the issues of child marriage, human trafficking and substance abuse.

Esther López López, San Pedro Sula, Honduras

After being displaced by Hurricane Mitch in 1998, Esther López López learned about Children International's sponsorship program. She became a volunteer and encouraged others to get involved volunteering with Children International as well. She also takes on leadership roles in her community. She served as the treasurer of the Parents Board at the Renacer de Sula school from 2009-2013, and she currently serves as the Chairman of the Health Committee for the Health Center in the community of Naco.

Rico Taller Borbe Jr., Tabaco, Philippines

Rico Borbe has been a Children International volunteer since 1987 and is the only Children International programs volunteer in his community on San Miguel Island. He helped facilitate the implementation of the Nutrition Rehabilitation program through feeding programs and educational classes for mothers of malnourished children. It was also through his leadership that several families in his community now have planted home gardens as a way of combating malnutrition and promoting self-reliance. In addition, Mr. Borbe leads an effort called the Clean and Green program, which engages youth in environmental protection activities.

Eric Miller, Little Rock, Arkansas, United States

As volunteer coach for the University of Arkansas – Little Rock's CI Warriors football team, Eric Miller has played a vital role in the creation and growth of these young players and the sports program. The program began with a mere 15 youth participants and now serves more than 110 football players and cheerleaders, thanks in large part to Mr. Miller's volunteering efforts. At a time when youth, especially young men, begin to disconnect from school, family or friends, Coach Eric is there to serve as a mentor and encourage them to stay involved.

Children International would like to congratulate all of the finalists for winning in their regions. The organization will announce the winner of the 2014 Inspire Award™ in January.

Learn more about this year's Inspire Award™ finalists. Learn more about the Inspire Award™.

About Children International

Children International prepares children and youth to escape the traps of poverty by supporting their critical needs, building resilience and engaging them in transformative activities. Children International accomplishes this by providing crucial benefits and compassionate care through easily accessible, modern community centers. Children International's presence, programs and supporters have a positive impact on children, youth, families and communities; provide protection; encourage self-sufficiency; and serve as catalysts for change.

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