

KARI CHRISTENSEN – Communications/Technology Category

1. Short nominee bio: in 70 words or less provide important accomplishments that support your nominee being chosen as the 2016 award recipient in their category.

Ms. Christensen recently started a new communications, design and grant writing consulting company, Trillium Link LLC. Kari's social media marketing efforts have helped build a sizeable following for the Shared Harvest Food Co-Op, Boys & Girls Club of Elgin and other vital organizations. Ms. Christensen is a tireless networking professional and staunch supporter and promoter of all things Elgin.

2. Describe how you have known or worked with the nominee.

I have known and worked with Kari Christensen for nearly three years as a supportive community volunteer in Elgin. Together we are also members of the Elgin Young Professionals Network, the Elgin 360 Photography Club and we have worked together on various special events and projects as well.

3. List the significant achievements of the nominee in the named category.

While balancing a job search and several other personal and professional responsibilities, Kari served as Chair of the Downtown Neighborhood Association's 15th Annual Window Wonderland event, where she essentially single-handedly organized, marketed and promoted the event – a task normally handled by multiple paid staff and an entire committee of volunteers. Her dedication and resourcefulness in orchestrating and promoting all aspects of this complex, multi-faceted event - including programming, publicity, and obtaining event sponsorships – all with minimal staff support is a testament to the spirit of the Illinois Main Street model of community development thru volunteerism as well as to Kari's ingenuity and leadership qualities. Her efforts won her the Individual Volunteer Award at the 2014 Downtown Neighborhood Association Awards Gala.

Thru positive messaging and good old fashioned advocacy, Kari has also helped heighten the profile and awareness of the Elgin Shared Harvest Food Cooperative, a cooperatively owned grocery store that will soon link consumers to affordable, healthy, locally-produced food, foster sustainable agriculture, and contribute to the economic and cultural vibrancy of the Elgin community. As a volunteer board member, she has built a significant community following by leveraging innovative social media and e-mail marketing practices on behalf of the organization. Because of her extensive communication and messaging efforts, the food co-op is fast approaching its goals for shareholder membership.

Her Facebook page and timeline of photos, "check-ins", "tags", "mentions", "shares" and conversations are quite literally a "who's-who" of Elgin institutions, businesses, organizations and engaged citizens, business owners and local leaders. She is quite simply building a stronger community thru social interaction one communication at a time.

4. List past or present positions of leadership or responsibility.

After spending over a decade in the corporate realm of private equity as an Accounting Manager as well as a recent stint as a Mission Investment Specialist/Development Assistant for the Boys and Girls Club of Elgin, promoting the positives of and better connecting the community to the organization, Kari has now ventured down an exciting new path of entrepreneurship. She recently started a new communications, design and grant writing consulting company this past year called Trillium Link LLC to support non-profit and for-profit businesses with creative consulting services.

Kari also serves as the Board Treasurer of the Shared Harvest Food Cooperative, where she not only maintains the books for this Elgin non-profit organization but also served as Co-Chair for the co-op's annual Membership Drive.

She is also the Treasurer for the Elgin 360 Photography Club, a local group of community-oriented photography enthusiasts who meet once a month to discuss techniques and tips as well as to support the arts and local business.

She served as Chair of the Downtown Neighborhood Association's 2013 Window Wonderland event, where she single-handedly coordinated nearly all aspects of this cherished annual Downtown Elgin event including programming, marketing, publicity, and obtaining sponsorships.

She also served as a member of the Elgin Junior Service Board, a volunteer organization that works to enhance and support health, education, and well-being of women and children in Elgin and the surrounding communities.

5. Describe qualities of leadership demonstrated by the nominee.

At her core Kari is extremely selfless and very giving of both her time and of herself. When she first signed up as a member of the Downtown Neighborhood Association in 2013, she won an iPad as part of a membership drive raffle promotion we were conducting. Upon hearing this news, she immediately asked the organization to donate the iPad to the students at the YWCA Elgin.

She has proven to be extraordinarily entrepreneurial and resourceful, which are two absolute necessities in the non-profit world that she makes her living in and gives so generously of her time and efforts.

She is also not afraid to take risks. In 2013, after more than a decade in the corporate world, Kari elected to cast off the corporate shackles, without a net mind you, all in the hopes of pursuing her passion of helping the people and businesses of her community. It was a calculated risk that has paid off for her, for the Boys and Girls Club and for the Elgin community.

Her positivity, boundless energy and dedication to Elgin are traits we should all aspire to. Since arriving in town, Kari has quite literally hit the ground running as a staunch supporter and promoter of all things Elgin. Despite the long commute to-and-from her former office in Chicago, there was nary a night of the week that Kari was not out supporting local businesses, partaking in local events, volunteering her time for local causes or building connections in the

Elgin community. Now making her professional home in Elgin as well, she is able to dedicate even more time to enjoying, supporting and advocating for our great city.

6. Describe how this person has demonstrated a commitment to excellence.

Kari's commitment to excellence is demonstrated by the sheer number of community commitments she undertakes. In addition to her work with the Boys and Girls Club, she invests significant time volunteering for Elgin Junior Service Board, Cinderella's Closet, Little Angels, Suicide Prevention Services, Have a Heart Community Dinner, Citizens for Debbie Miller, Side Street Studio Arts, Elgin Fringe Festival, Shared Harvest Food Cooperative, Downtown Neighborhood Association of Elgin, Elgin 4th of July Parade, Downtown Elgin Pub Crawl, Elgin International Festival, Art & Soul on the Fox, Art on the Eighth and City of Elgin Special Events.

She is also a tireless networking pro and continues to advocate for and communicate the positives of Elgin thru a variety of local groups including the Elgin Young Professionals Network and Elgin 360 Photography Club, as well as, at networking events thru the Elgin Technology Center, Downtown Neighborhood Association and the Elgin Area Chamber.

7. Explain how the nominee made an outstanding or innovative contribution in the category.

Kari's savvy social media marketing and communication efforts have helped build a sizeable following for the Shared Harvest Food Co-Op, Boys & Girls Club of Elgin and other vital organizations. Furthermore her willingness to go above and beyond and actually "walk the walk", by putting a smiling face to that positive messaging she so adeptly sends out online into Elgin's business community offline, makes her an invaluable community development asset for this city.

Kari's grant-writing prowess also lead to some notable financial support successes for the Boys and Girls Club of Elgin during her tenure.

8. List any achievement which has made improvements in the specific profession, business, or service.

Her enormous success with single-handedly organizing Downtown Elgin's Window Wonderland with minimal resources in 2013 has no doubt reinvigorated the DNA's volunteer methodology and will hopefully lead to additional new growth in the organization's volunteer base and the continued revitalization of Downtown Elgin.