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**MARCIA H. SIMMONS OF VISIONS TO BE RECOGNIZED
FOR 25 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP**
VISIONS' Merger with Children, Inc., of Northern Kentucky Celebrated

CINCINNATI, OH – March 19, 2013 – Marcia H. Simmons, the founder and retiring executive director of VISIONS, will receive the Fourth Annual Charity in Action Award in recognition of her 25 years of innovative leadership in the education of teen mothers and their pre-kindergarten children to help families break the cycle of poverty.

The award, which preserves the legacy of the Dominican Sisters as street workers supporting the poor and sick in the West End and Over-the-Rhine, will be presented at “Raising of the Green” this Saturday, March 23 at the Bell Event Centre, 444 Reading Road, in downtown Cincinnati.

Simmons began working for VISIONS' predecessor agency, Dominican Community Services, in 1988. She conducted a research and feasibility study and led the planning, design and implementation of the VISIONS program. The primary goal of the program was to address the needs, educational, psychological and social, of low-income adolescent mothers and their children by providing childcare for children six weeks to three years and support services for parents.

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Secondarily, the program addressed the high dropout rate by teenaged mothers. The VISIONS program opened in February 1990.

In 1993, Simmons was appointed executive director. She successfully led the agency through expansion, relocation, rebranding, financial stability and finally the merger with Children, Inc. of Northern Kentucky on January 1, 2013. While she retired as executive director the end of last year, she is assisting with the transition plan.

“Marcia has a deep understanding of the paralyzing burden of poverty and, thanks to her leadership, several generations of families have benefitted from her vision to inspire hope and help break the cycle of generational poverty,” said Rick Hulefeld, founder and executive director of Children, Inc. “We know that Children, Inc., and VISIONS will be better together, sharing a similar vision and commitment to families, while being innovative, regionally impactful and cost efficient,” he added.

“The decision to merge with Children, Inc. was reached after more than 16 months of study and careful consideration of several potential partners,” said Marcia H. Simmons, founder of VISIONS. “We are confident that VISIONS’ legacy and future are in good hands to ensure the sustainability and quality of our programs.”

Children, Inc. founded in 1977 in Covington, Ky., has become a leader in high-quality early childhood programs and resources for educators with nearly 200 programs throughout Kentucky. VISIONS will become the Ohio Division of Children, Inc. Hulefeld will lead the combined agency, and Denise L. Steward, VISIONS’ current director of Early Childhood Education, will lead the Ohio Division. Combining the two organizations will create a broader, deeper community impact on both sides of the Ohio River.

Serving as VISIONS’ major annual fundraiser, “Raising of the Green” starts at 6:00 p.m. with cocktails, silent and live auctions and live music; dinner and the program will begin at 7:35 p.m. at the Bell Event Centre. Faithful VISIONS donors can continue to designate their gifts to VISIONS programs.

For more information about the event or to purchase tickets, please visit on-line at <http://raisingofthegreen.eventbrite.com/#> or call 513-651-2229.