

2003-2004 Service To Mankind Award

Mrs. Robert Pettit (Katherine)

For more than twenty-five years, Kathy Pettit has donated her time and effort to improving the lives of those around her. She has become known and respected in the Chapin Community as someone who will help those in need, regardless of race, color, creed, or circumstance as well as someone who can find practical ways of helping others.

Twenty years ago, Kathy tired of editing a professional trade magazine for the apparel industry and established her own company, Media Concepts, Inc. which assists businesses and non-profit companies in their communications efforts. Her editorial work had carried her all over the world, and she had observed how competing businesses were reluctant to share their trade secrets. During much of the same time, she had participated in volunteer work where groups were anxious to share their success stories with other groups and individuals with the hope that they would be copied. The contrast was compelling.

Kathy was instrumental in helping to establish the St. Francis Thrift Store in Chapin as a way to help the needy retain their dignity while purchasing clothes and household items. Over the years, thousands of dollars have been made through this ministry, and all the profits have gone directly back into outreach needs.

Eighteen years ago, the We Care Center of Chapin was begun to provide gifts of food, clothing, fuel, and other necessities to people in need. Kathy Pettit helped to organize this interdenominational ministry manned by volunteers from Chapin area churches. She has also served on, the We Care board, either as President or Secretary. Every year the We Care Center provides Thanksgiving dinners for more than 100 local families in addition to the normal services provided all year long which include a food pantry, utility and transportation assistance, as well as referrals to social service agencies.

Kathy's church is St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal Church in Chapin where she has served on the vestry (the lay governing board) three times, including chair of its outreach committee. This past summer, St. Francis held its fifteenth annual Outreach Day Camp for about 30 underprivileged children in the Chapin area aged 6-10 years old. This camp was the vision of Kathy, and she has directed it each year. From Kathy's standpoint, one of the most important elements of the camp's success is that the children are exposed to adults who believe in them and believe that they can succeed.

In recent years, the camp has brought in experts to help teach these children how to survive violence and abuse, as well as avoid the dangers of gangs. Approximately 50 volunteers assist with this effort each year, including more than twenty teen counselors (some traveling from North Carolina and Florida) who donate their week to mentor these children.

Kathy has given from her own personal resources to those in need when funds have not been available. If a child needs money for a field trip or if someone cannot pay an electric bill, Kathy Pettit is the one they call. She is not only respected by the people she has helped, but she is loved as well, especially by the Day Camp children who call her "Miss Kathy."

Five years ago, Kathy founded a non-profit organization named Good Works Alliance whose primary goal is to develop practical how-to manuals for use by charitable groups who want to replicate successful programs. Good Works Alliance has so far produced, printed, and made available two manuals, one showing how to establish and effectively run a summer camp for at-risk children and one showing how to establish an after-school tutoring program. A third manual, which is in the research stage, will describe 20 small projects that can make a difference and yet be done with minimal effort and on a minimal budget.

Her goal for the future is to obtain the funding to make these manuals available through a website, accompanied by message boards to allow organization to share ongoing ideas to help those in need.

She currently also serves on the Board of Directors for Project Pet, whose mission is to form a federation of like-minded organizations and individuals to create a self-sustaining Education/Adoption Center that will assist, develop, promote and strengthen the quality of life for the Midlands community.

Kathy's undergraduate degree in English from Winthrop and her Master's in American Literature from USC with additional graduate work in Mass Communications have stood her in good stead with both her professional life, which depends on good writing, and her volunteer work especially with Good Works Alliance. Additionally, Kathy wrote two grant proposals to the Episcopal Diocese enabling St. Francis to purchase a school bus to use for the Day Camp and tutoring and to help fund the first Outreach Camp.

Besides being active in her church and the community, Kathy and her husband Bob enjoy their children and two grandchildren as well as traveling, especially to Europe. Their latest trip to Europe lasted five weeks and was still "too short." Kathy also enjoys reading, although her full-time job and the 15 to 20 hours per week that she devotes to her charitable work don't leave her much time to read or do anything else, for that matter.

Over and over again, Kathy Pettit has been directly involved in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and caring for widows and orphans. Her faith is expressed in her actions- she really doesn't talk that much about it. She just goes out there and does it. She shows she cares and her actions speak louder than words. Through her efforts, Kathy Pettit has given help and perhaps even more important - hope - to people who had nowhere else to turn.

In recognition of her long and dedicated service to others, Kathy was awarded the interdenominational South Carolina Christian Action in Service Award for 1999. The

Richland Sertoma Club takes great satisfaction in nominating Kathy Pettit to receive the Service to Mankind Award for 2004 and strongly endorses her nomination.