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For Immediate Release

Austin Blessings Co-Op to Host First Annual Community of Kindness Awards Ceremony

*Celebrating Volunteers Who Make a Difference*

AUSTIN, TEXAS, April 5, 2024– Austin Blessings Co-Op, a non-traditional cooperative founded by Riverbend Church in 2019 to provide a platform for delivering services to Austin's most vulnerable residents, is excited to announce their first annual Community of Kindness Awards celebration, hosted on Friday, May 3 from 6PM – 9PM at Riverbend Church's Smith Family Chapel.

The Community of Kindness Awards seek to recognize those individuals and organizations who are committed to unifying the greater Austin community and transforming lives by volunteering their time and talents through Austin Blessings Co-op's initiatives. "Our objective from the beginning has been to bring peace to all those who are suffering in our community," said Brian Rawson, Founder of Austin Blessings Co-op. "The individuals and organizations we honor today represent the legacy of kindness that we can and must leave for future generations."

A total of 60 nominations were reviewed by a panel of leaders from across the Austin community, including representatives from churches, non-profits, and industry. From the deep pool of extraordinary nominees, six individuals -- Elliott Arizmendi, Sheri Ford, Gloria Gomez, Lana Morris, Caris Palmer, and Carol Rawson -- and three organizations -- The Other Ones Foundation, Austin Reconciliation Church, and Electric Transmission Texas -- were selected to receive an inaugural Community of Kindness award.

To be considered for an award, nominees must have demonstrated a significant and sustainable commitment to volunteer work over the last 12 months, doing so in the spirit of "chrestotes" kindness, a Greek word meaning "kindness that is serviceable and meets real needs, with a special focus on the spirit in which an act is done." Beyond the nominees' heart and passion, their work must have made a positive, measurable impact on the community, organization, or initiative they served, measured by the number of people served, the results achieved, or the transformational changes they brought about to people or communities.

"It's heart-warming to participate in honoring those who would never think to honor themselves," shared Stephanie Rollins, Associate Teaching Pastor at Riverbend Church. "The humility, compassion, and selflessness of each of the nominees was evident in the way they live their lives. Serving on this panel was truly inspiring a reminder of the inherent goodness of the human heart, and of the powerful, rippling effects one's actions can have on a community. Austin is enriched because of these servant leaders, and I'm delighted that this event is bringing their stories forward."

The celebration on May 3, honoring all volunteers, nominees and award winners, will feature live music from Zac Wilkerson and the Ange K Band, as well as heavy hors d'oeuvres, sweets, and drinks. Some of Austin's top industry and non-profit leaders who champion service and community involvement will be in attendance.

"It is the people that make Austin special," said Chris Turnley, EVP of Member Experience at UFCU. "I am continually inspired and changed by their passion to serve each other at every stage of life and in every circumstance. Being involved in the Community of Kindness awards highlights how blessed we are to be surrounded by people who make their world better every day, and it inspires me to do the same."

The Community of Kindness Awards celebration is open to everyone, with 100% of proceeds going to benefit organizations affiliated with Austin Blessing's Co-op. Tickets (general admission and/or VIP) are required and can be purchased on the Community of Kindness Awards website.

To find out more about Austin Blessings Co-op or to serve with one of their affiliates, visit their website at [www.austinblessings.org](http://www.austinblessings.org).