

**2008 INA Nanny of the Year  
Donna Robinson's Acceptance Speech**

There is a sign in one of my client's houses that reads:

**Life is judged not by the moments we breathe,  
but by the moments that leave us breathless.**

I think this qualifies as one of those moments!

I could say I'm speechless but you would all know I'm lying!

I am blessed to have people like my nominating family the Agahs in my life.

I am here because four years ago my nanny mentor, Kim Dillon, called me as an old client had asked her if she knew anyone who could help them as they were not prepared yet to hire a nanny for their 4-week-old little girl.

She not only "sold" me to them, she made me believe I would be great for them. A good mentor has that affect on you!

I came to be with the Agahs for 8 weeks while they searched for a nanny. It was one of those matches that just clicked from the beginning. After about 4 weeks, Wendy approached me and said that they were planning a trip to the Caribbean and was thinking since we all got along so great, maybe I could extend my stay and go with them. She didn't really want to take a "new" nanny.

It was January in Ct and this Florida girl was freezing! Plus, at that point, all my jobs had been as a temporary nanny and it would give me exposure to the traveling portion. So trying to stay composed and professional, I managed to eek out "I think I could do that" while inside I was turning somersaults!

Now, I knew Wendy worked in sales for MTV before she did her Masters in Wine, but I would soon learn why she was so successful in sales! After we returned she mentioned that they were thinking I could stay on through June and go to France with them as they didn't want to travel with a baby and a new nanny.

France? Wow, that was tempting but I had to tell her I had contracts already for 6 weeks in NJ. For a normal client, that would have ended that discussion! But my Wendy was just warming up! She proposed I find them another temporary nanny, do my assignment, and then come back to them and go to France.

Little did I know that would set the pace for the next two years. Keep in mind that every time I left, Wendy and Jim had to adjust to a new nanny too. It couldn't have been easy for them and I learned a lot about loyalty from them.

Even though I was married and had to go home sometimes, she worked with me and found solutions. If our stretch was going to be long, she offered their apt in NYC so my husband could fly up and spend long weekends with me. My daughter, Marina lived in NYC so that was always a plus. I think my husband always enjoyed that change of scenery. He certainly deserved it as how could I have possibly followed my dreams if I had not been married to a man who understood my need in my later years for traveling adventures. The funny thing is he would come up when the Agahs were gone so we worked together for 2½ years before they ever met him! I think they secretly thought I made him up.

Finally, at the end of our second year, we planned the search for the full-time nanny. During that planning session, Wendy found out she was pregnant with Devin. My travel business had taken off but I thought about all the wonderful opportunities they had given me to learn the travel portion of my business and how loyal Jim and Wendy had been to me. So I told them I would stay through that next year and take no other jobs, just time off to go home as needed.

When Devin was a year old we finally said what I thought would be a final goodbye. Alex was my girl and Devin and I had bonded over 5 months of restless sleeping due to cutting teeth. I knew if Marina and Adam never had children, it was okay; I had my grandchildren even if not by blood!

Then Wendy and Jim did the ultimate. They found a nanny who would rather have 12 weeks off a year to be with her kids and family and I got to stay as their travel nanny!

Any family can love you when you are at the top of your game, but to stay loyal to you when you are only mediocre is rare. That's my Agah's. This past year, with my mom and father-in-law's death, I was not at my best. Yet, Wendy and Jim let my shortcomings go and continued to use and support me. They are one of the reasons I stand before you because I would never have had the nerve to apply without Wendy and Jim's encouragement through the years. In fact, they wrote their essays for the application while on a couples' weekend in the Caribbean!

Now, my road to the world of the nanny is diverse. I've worked with school kids, delinquent teens, rural and migrant children, a friend and I started a grass-root youth group dealing with racial harmony issues, and I even had 35 teenage Girl Scouts at one time! Now that will test your sanity! I didn't even become a nanny till I was 47! But you can read all about that in my portfolio.

What it won't tell you is my dreams and hopes for the world of nannies. The first INA conference I attended, I was so scared of all of you. I was just starting out and I sat in workshops and listened to you and thought, "Wow," I want to be that good some day!!

You inspired me year after year. Becky and Kellie came up to me that first conference and made me feel welcomed. They would talk to me during breaks and lunch and they always made me laugh. Pat Cascio, had just been chosen as INA president and she was so nice to me and would continue to be supportive through the years. I thought, *the president of INA knows my name!*

They probably don't even remember because kindness is something they do naturally. But for me, trying to find out if I belonged, it was monumental. Marni, who was NOTY that session, also extended me a long lasting friendship. I've always remembered those moments and made a decision that I would try to keep the kindness going.

I believe in all the different types of nannies in this room. My career path may be slightly different than yours but I hope you will see it compliments the profession. I have that rare opportunity to travel in many homes and what I sell is not myself but the profession. My clients will hire someone to take my place and I have that golden opportunity to help them understand our world.

Sometimes, I know nannies may feel I do too much for families and the person who takes my place will have it hard. But it is only by doing everything a family wants, that I can tell them later what won't work, what will burn their nanny out etc. They listen because I did it; I have the experience of the job.

The full-time nannies who have followed me have done far better than I ever could. I push conferences, paid education time—a concept many parents never even thought of, but to their credit, like the idea once you tell them the benefits.

When nannies write to me, and believe me they do, and want to start their own temporary business, I try and give them as much information that I can. If after a period of time, I feel I know them or get to meet them and my gut tells me they are the type of nanny who might enjoy this crazy world of mine, I have given them jobs I can't do.

I don't charge them and any referrals they get from those jobs are theirs to build on, after all they did the work. And many of my contemporaries have the same rule.

I was challenged early on to see if I really believed in this sisterhood of nannies. I was in business a few years when I saw a nanny was advertising herself as the traveling nanny in nanny ad sites. Now my web site was pretty established and I told myself I was worried her clients might find me, when it was her ad they saw. I am sure there was a good dose of indignation and ego thrown in too! I emailed her and told her of the conflict and said she might want to change her name.

“But this is what I do! I have business cards!” I could tell by her email that she was upset. So I thought about it some more and realized I had an important decision to make: would I encourage or discourage? I realized morally, she was right, there are only so many ways to describe what we do so I wrote her back and said I understand, if I get an email and I think it was you they wanted, I'd forward it to you.

While I did buy up domains with variations of my website, I was also prepared to accept the fact she might have already bought them. As more and more nannies choose the alternative fields, web sites names and wording start sounding more and more alike. When people ask me if that bothers me, I can honestly say no. I made my decision to support a long time ago and have never regretted it.

I can always hear my mom say, “the world doesn’t revolve around you, you must learn to revolve around the world”.

I’m not telling you this to score points, but rather to point out that the road to supporting sisterhood is not always smooth. For me, I had to have faith that my reputation was built on me and nothing could compromise that and I have a chance to do for nannies what Kim, Becky, Kellie and Marni did for me.

Recently, a new Travel Nanny site was added! I wrote her and welcomed her to our community and told her about INA and she joined! She couldn’t come this year but is hoping to next year. I can’t wait for her to meet all of you! I believe in the big picture, this continuous support of each other, as the goal. And that is why standing up here today means so much to me.

I know that I am the first alternative nanny to receive this, but I am hoping that you see only another sister standing before you. I believe in the tradition of this award. Some think it is wrong for nannies to compete against one another and while I respect that as a non-competitive person, I don’t think of this award as competition. I think of it as a personal challenge to appreciate your own value. It offers you a chance to take a serious look at what you believe in and encourages you to step forward and let others support you.

Any nanny who stood on this stage will agree that when you are done, you have all those kind words from friends and clients recorded; and you see your life as a nanny for the first time in full perspective. At that moment, with the last word typed, it doesn’t matter if you win, for you know you have won the hearts of those you served. In that moment you are forever changed.

The media can and will tell the negative stories about childcare givers, but it is up to us to share the positive. We need to have that spot on the INA page where the good news about NOTY is spotlighted. I can’t tell you how many parents read that page and how many comments I get about how impressed they are with the modern nanny.

There is no way I can stand before you and tell you it doesn’t feel funny to stand on this stage all by myself. But when I reflect on the hard work that went into the application, how many clients and mentors reached out to me, I feel honored to represent them.

Besides, Lord knows, I've always been labeled different! I'd like to think it means I just have the courage to follow through when there are difficult choices. And so I can truthfully say, I am excited to be standing here.

So I want to challenge you for next year. Nannies can nominate nannies for this award. It is my hope in the years to come, you will look around you each year and if you know an outstanding nanny, nominate her or him. Who judges quality better than another nanny?

You are surrounded by some of the greatest agencies in the business. They are enthused about our world and I hope that agencies will once again look at the nannies they have placed and seriously consider nominating one as they have in the past.

Or maybe a parent will read this on the web and think, *when I hire that great nanny, I'm going to keep this award in mind!*

Yes, I've heard the "why I can't do it" including the application is a series of essays and "I am not a good writer!" I can tell you it is okay because what you have is passion and so you sit down and you write down your heart, don't worry about spelling or grammar. Give it to a good friend to edit. It will be your heart that we read. Be fearless! Believe in yourself! Who knows who you will inspire—you don't have to win to be influential!

The hardest question on the application is "why do you want to be NOTY". For me, it was because a few years back some board members consisting of nannies and agencies, said if we say we represent all nannies, we need to make sure the NOTY includes all nannies, and they changed the rules so we could qualify.

For the first time we weren't asked to sit outside the door, we were asked to come in and that touched me. The only way I could say "thank you" was to apply. And that is why I stand here before you in these odd circumstances.

I hope next year this area will be filled with applicants. I know that you will find like I did, that at the end of the application you will have a powerful portfolio as you will have had to search out your supporters and you will be amazed at the end of the application, at how many people love and respect you.

It is a moving and humbling experience.

Trust me, at that moment; we are all Nannies of the Year.

Random acts of kindness, let's keep it going!

Thank you for accepting me into your sisterhood.