

Marcia Hall

2011 INA Nanny of the Year™

Acceptance Speech

What a journey I have taken over the last 15 years to get to this point in my life and in my career. If you have been to conference for the last 2 years, you will know that this is my third time being nominated for Nanny of the Year award. Some of you might be thinking “She must REALLY want this award.” Though it might seem like my reaction should have been “YES, I FINNALLY GOT IT”, I can honestly tell you this is the most surprising and humbling moment of my life. I am proud to stand before you today and accept the 2011 International Nanny Association Nanny of the Year award.

Six years ago when I joined the INA, receiving the award was the furthest thing from my mind. I was taking care of the three "J" boys - ages 10, 8 and 7. After almost 8 years with them, their mom and dad sat me down one day and dropped the news: they would be moving to Costa Rica. I was stunned, sad and excited – FOR THEM. I knew that it was their dream, but I would miss them so much. As I took them to the airport on their last day. I remember thinking my life was getting on the plane with them. I had spent 8 years with those boys; teaching, playing and loving them. I did not know what the road ahead of me looked like.

Little did I know that within the year I would meet and marry my husband. Scott is so different from me in many ways and if you have ever seen pictures of us, you know how true this is. However, he is just the same as me in the important ways.

At first after the "J" family left I worked for a few families part time. These children filled me with joy every day I was with them. I always say that most people get up dragging themselves to work each day, but I wake up excited to go to my job because it is always a new adventure.

In 2007, I was offered a full-time position with the "D" family and I accepted. There I cared for THE most compassionate and tenderhearted 3 year old I have ever met. We went on some of the most amazing “voyages” together.

Later that year, after 8 months of marriage, Scott and I found out I was pregnant. We were elated and told everyone. My employer knew hours after Scott and I did. Sadly that was not to be and the loss of our first child was a blow that took us months to recover from.

In the late winter of 2008 we decided that adoption was our road to parenthood. Nine months later we were licensed foster parents for the state of Wisconsin. In November of that year, we received notice that we were chosen as foster parents of a little eight month old girl. After three months of court dates and waiting to meet her, this too ended in tragedy. The loss of our second child was also heartbreaking.

During this time, I was also looking for a new job as a nanny. Interviewing for nanny positions can be difficult; finding the right match for your personality can be a challenge. Of course the family needs to think it's the right fit too. However, try going to an interview stating that you and your husband are in the process of adopting a child. You don't know what child, you don't know exactly what age the child will be and you don't know when it might happen. Plus you would like to bring your child to work with you – that is a hard sell.

However, I found a family that was willing to take a chance on a crazy nanny like me. The "B" family met me and offered me the position the same day. I started the following Monday. Little did any of us know what was about to happen.

Three days later, on my day off, I received a phone call at 2 in the afternoon. There was a one day old baby girl in the hospital and they were looking for a family for her. My husband and I were there four hours later meeting our “peanut.”

The phone call to the "J" family that afternoon was a nerve-racking one. How was I going to tell them that the nanny who had started only three days earlier was now the mother to a one day old baby? I know that the choice whether to let me stay or to find another new nanny was a difficult one for them but again they gave me a shot. I went back to work when Nadia was one week old.

Those first few months as a new mom and a nanny for a new family are still a bit of a blur, but somehow we made it through. Here we are more than two years later and they are still taking that chance on me. They are an amazing family to work for. I am truly blessed to know them.

Every day Nadia and I wake and get into our van and go to “J’s” house. My daughter and my charges are a lot like brother and sisters. There are arguments, chasing matches and sometimes hurt feelings and bodies. I try hard to treat each of them fairly and equally. Being a mom and a nanny at the same time is not always easy but I love each day.

JA is four and she loves to discuss everything and anything. We are convinced she will someday be a lawyer, because she is able to reason her way out of and into everything. She loves gymnastics and loves to learn. I have been amazed at how quickly she has learned her letters and numbers and I am convinced she will be reading by the end of the summer before she starts K4. She has such a drive.

Jl is eight and he is the question man. He has a million questions and not your normal “Why are we doing that?” kind of questions. The boy wants to know everything. He also craves community. He would rather be with people arguing with them than to be by himself. We are convinced that someday he will be the president of his fraternity.

The arrangement I have to bring my daughter to work with me adds a dimension to every area of my employment. Though I always try to be fair and balanced, I am sure that it affects the way I interact with Jl and JA at times. It also effects the conversations I have with their parents. I strive to go out of my way to look for the ways my daughter changes things and make adjustments accordingly. I am pleased to have found a family that is both willing to work with me and willing to have a great line of communication open. Without willingness on both sides this relationship would not work.

As I said before, I am actually quite shocked to be standing before you today. Three years ago I was approached by Nettie Webber, a local Nanny Agency Owner, who asked me if I would accept my

first Nanny of the Year nomination. I was stunned. The experience of being nominated that first year was thrilling and overwhelming.

During and after conference that year, I was told by several people that they wanted to nominate me again, including my current employers. I respectfully accepted the nomination for a second year. When I learned that I had not received the award again I wish I could tell you that it was not at all painful, but I am human after all and there was some sadness. In truth it is always a great honor to be counted among the best nannies in the country and I had a fantastic time being nominated both years. However, I was NOT going to be accepting a 3rd nomination. I thought “some people just aren’t meant to be the Nanny of the Year.”

Though I had been a member of the INA for a few years, I had only attended conference for the two years I have been nominated. Really getting a chance to be involved in INA through the conferences made continuing to be a part of it a must. This past fall I learned that I had been nominated for an INA board position, and accepted that with excitement. In the year since the last Annual Conference, my coaching practice – Strong Roots Family Coaching – has begun to take shape. So this year, I also submitted proposals to teach a few of the workshops I offer parents in my community. I was pleased to have my proposals accepted.

Things were going well and I was excited about conference and my future with INA. Then two weeks before the Nanny of the Year portfolios were due, I received four separate emails from four different nannies that I highly respect. They were encouraging me to accept the Nanny of the Year nomination again. After I confirmed that they had all contacted me independently and there was no huge plot to completely embarrass me, I accepted the nomination for the third time. I now had only ten days to complete the portfolio requirements. So I guess it was a good thing I had some practice with the paperwork.

This Nanny of the Year journey has taught me that there may be many things in life to be afraid of, but being nominated for Nanny of the Year is not one of them. I was nervous to accept a third nomination because I thought it might make me look un-accepting of my past two nominations.

Perhaps some of might think that. However, I know that being up here today is the greatest honor I could be given as a nanny and that the only reason I am here is because there are people that believe in me. I also know that I have been in awe of not only the two women that received this award before me, but at all of the women that have been nominated right alongside me. I am also incredibly aware of the MANY nannies that are before me today that deserve this award as well.

One of the questions we are asked in the interview for this award is what special qualities you would bring to the award. Each year my answer has been the same. I consider myself a “regular” nanny. Not that I believe I am only average at my job performance, but that I am like all the nannies that I see before me today and I meet in Milwaukee at the Northshore Professional Nanny Alliance meetings. I do not have a specialization in multiples, newborns or special needs children. Nor am I a traveling or temporary nanny. I work with children whose moms and dads have to work for a living and want the very best care for their children, plain and simple. Though I am being honored today because I do that well, I do it no better than any of you.

So my challenge to you today is that if someone has talked to you about being nominated don’t just shrug it off and don’t be afraid to do it. I mean, what is the worst that can happen? Look at me, and feel secure that “just being nominated” is really not that bad. In fact it is pretty amazing. If you know a nanny in this room or elsewhere that you believe deserves to be Nanny of the Year, give them a call and nudge them, encourage them and nominate them next year.

Since it is still my year and I still have the stage, there are a number of people I would like to thank for this great tribute.

First is the family that currently entrusts me with their greatest treasure. I thank them for not only the nomination for this award, but for the awesome relationship they consistently work with me to build. It is not always easy to have someone else come into your home, stay with your children and use your stuff. And that is even more difficult when that person brings her two year old child with her. But they are caring, patient and understanding. They love not only me but also my daughter. Thank you for that.

Thank you to Sheilagh Roth and Caron Goode for allowing me to be trained at The English Nanny and Governess School and The Academy of Coaching Parents International. The English Nanny and Governess School taught me how to care for children with creativity, gentleness and knowledge. The Academy of Coaching Parents International has taught me how to help encourage and enable parents to raise healthy well balanced children.

Thank you to my many nanny friends, especially those that are a part of the Northshore Professional Nanny Alliance, who learn and grow as professional nannies with me.

Thanks to all the parents who have employed me over the past fourteen years. I have loved working for every one of them. They have each taught me about life in some way and have helped me to grow in my child care expertise. Today I am proud to call them friends.

Thank you to my family and friends, especially my mom and dad who probably never imagined that sixteen years ago when I came to them and said "I want to be a NANNY" anything like today would ever happen. Mom and dad you have been supportive of me in every way. Thank you for your constant love and encouragement.

Thanks to my husband. Scott you truly make me who I am. Your love, support and encouragement make me stronger and able to take on anything life brings. You and I have been through some storms and I am sure there are many to come. But I would not want to go through them with anyone but you.

Thanks to my daughter, my amazing DIA BUG who is truly an answer to a prayer. Your energy, humor and intelligence make every moment of every day the best of my life. I thank you for your patience in being woken everyday to go play at a home that is not yours and I thank you for sharing your mommy.

Thanks to God. There have been a lot of personal ups and downs for me over the last 6 years. I believe He has been there for the journey. And I thank Him for that because there have been times I was not crazy about the turbulence. but He has still stood beside me. Today I see more clearly His timing in everything.

Thank you to the fifteen children I have had the privilege of being a nanny to. You each hold a special place in my heart and will never be forgotten. I have enjoyed every moment I have spent singing, dancing and playing with you. There are so many words I could use to describe each one of you that I could spend another 15 minutes telling every one of your amazing lives. But I will finish with just one word to describe each of you.

Thank you AS –my sensitive one

Thank you ER – my bright one

Thank you FS – independent one

Thank you GD – my sweet one

Thank you JD– compassionate one

Thank you JI –my curious one

Thank you JA – determined one

Thank you J – my daring one

Thank you KS–my friendly one

Thank you MR – my gentle one

Thank you MS – my bold one

Thank you MJ – my creative one

Thank you RJ – adventurous one

Thank you SA – my strong one

Thank you WJ – my brave one

And finally thank you to all of the INA for the great privilege to serve you as the 2011 Nanny of the Year. I will do my best to represent the amazing organization that it is.