

Whittier woman in line for national \$25,000 award

By Sandra T. Molina, Staff Writer
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WHITTIER - A willow tree stands in the front yard of the Bridge of Faith H.O.M.E.

"It's a symbol," said Bridge of Faith founder Carol Reza, "that the women who are in our program won't need to cry no more."

H.O.M.E. stands for Home Opportunity Meets Emancipation.

Reza, who bought the house on Mulberry Drive six years ago for those coming out of the foster care system, has been a symbol of hope herself.

Now her work has earned the 66-year-old Whittier resident a place on L'Oreal Paris' Fourth Annual Women of Worth list.

She and nine other honorees will be celebrated next month at an awards dinner and program in New York City.

Each will receive \$5,000 for their charities and another \$5,000 will be donated in Reza's name to The Ovarian Cancer Research Fund.

"The money will go to paying for everyday expenses," Reza said.

A friend nominated Reza, who was part of foster care as a youth.

A national winner will be selected from online voting at www.womenofworth.com, and will receive another \$25,000 for her charity.

The public has until 9 p.m. Tuesday to cast their votes for Reza.

The 10 finalists were chosen from nearly 2,500 applicants.

"We are extremely proud to have the opportunity to celebrate this year's honorees," said Karen Fondu, president of L'Oreal Paris. "These women truly embody the spirit of volunteerism that brings

to life the L'Oreal Paris' unwavering belief that every woman has the power to make a difference in the world."

It's made a difference for five-year resident Rose Nieves, 42.

"I needed a safe place when I left rehab," she said. "I knew Carol, and she made it possible for me to come here."

Nieves called the recognition by L'Oreal "phenomenal."

"She's an amazing woman, and I couldn't be happier or more proud of her," Nieves said.

The residence, which is home to five women, appeared on Reza's radar more than six years ago when she was a Realtor,



Carol Reza stands in front of the Bridge of Faith home on Mulberry Drive in Whittier on Thursday November 19, 2009. Reza has been named "Woman of Worth" by L'Oreal Paris and is vying for the national honoree. Voters are able to vote for her online. (SGVN/Staff Photo by Keith Durflinger)

"My full-time job is caring for these young women," she said.

"This place provides a safe and nurturing environment that prepares the girls for a successful life," Reza said.

Reza cited statistics saying more than 80 percent of foster children become homeless within two years.

"Our goal is to rescue, restore and assist emancipated foster girls as they develop into woman of value, importance and purpose," she said.