FINALISTS ANNOUNCED FOR FIRST ANNUAL
Paul and Joyce Aicher Leadership in Democracy Award

NATIONWIDE -- For more than 25 years, Everyday Democracy has worked with communities across the country to foster a healthy and vibrant democracy – one that is characterized by strong relationships across divides, leadership development, including the voices of all people, and understanding and addressing structural racism.

This year, Everyday Democracy launched the first annual Paul and Joyce Aicher Leadership in Democracy Award, which will honor its founders, and people and organizations whose work embodies their vision with a $10,000 cash award.

After considering more than 80 nominations from around the country, Everyday Democracy has announced four finalists who are being considered for the final award, and additional honorees whose work deserves recognition.

“We were truly overwhelmed by the scope and diversity of nominations, and the transformative work being done throughout the country,” said Everyday Democracy’s Executive Director Martha McCoy. “It’s been an honor to learn about some of the ways people are creating opportunities to come together and create meaningful change and a democracy that includes all voices.”

Paul J. Aicher and his wife Joyce were known for their generosity and creative genius. A discussion course at Penn State helped Paul find his own voice in civic life early on, and sparked his lifelong interest in helping others find theirs. Paul founded the Topsfield Foundation and the Study Circles Resource Center, now called Everyday Democracy, in 1989. The organization has now worked with more than 600 communities throughout the country, helping bring together diverse people to understand and make progress on difficult issues, incorporating lessons learned into discussion guides and other resources, and offering training and resources to help develop the field and practice of deliberative democracy.

The Paul and Joyce Aicher Leadership in Democracy Award honors work that creates opportunities for meaningful civic participation for all people, addresses racial inequities through
dialogue and collective action, and shows the power of bridging all kinds of divides by making
dialogue a regular part of how a community works.

In addition to the finalists, Everyday Democracy is honoring five organizations whose work
embodies the values and spirit of Paul and Joyce’s work, and who can serve as a model and
inspiration to others. Honorees will be announced November 7.

The award winner will be announced November 15th.

**Everyday Democracy** is a project of The Paul J. Aicher Foundation, a private operating
foundation dedicated to strengthening deliberative democracy and improving the quality of
public life in the United States. Since its inception, Everyday Democracy has worked with more
than 600 communities by providing advice, training, tools and resources. It also partners with
national and local organizations to strengthen the field of dialogue and deliberation and promote
a stronger, more equitable democracy. The Topsfield Foundation, created in 1989, was re-
named the Paul J. Aicher Foundation after Paul’s death in 2002. More information is at
https://www.everyday-democracy.org/

**FINALISTS ARE:**

**Families United for Education, Albuquerque, New Mexico**

Families United for Education (FUE) is a group of families, community advocates, and
organizations who developed and advocated for a family engagement policy – the first ever such
policy written by families and implemented by a school district in the country. The group
adopted four core principles: Fostering safe and welcoming environments; strengthening
relationships and capacity with families, teachers, school administrators, and community
partners; expanding communication between families, communities, community partners and
schools; and cultivating equitable and effective systems.

Families United for Education was chosen to be a finalist for their courage and persistence.
They’ve connected deliberative democracy to both the organization and institutions, and
continue to have dialogues with the school system. They truly model how to bring people
together and change systems.

*FUE contacts: Emma Sandoval and Tony Watkins, familiesunitedforeducation@gmail.com*

**Generation Justice, Albuquerque, New Mexico**

Generation Justice (GJ) is a nationally recognized, award-winning multi-racial, multi-cultural
project in New Mexico. It trains youth to harness the power of media and give rise to narratives
based on truth, analysis and hope. Youth are inspired to become media makers committed to
media justice, social transformation, and positive community development through dialogue. GJ
is an independent organization that operates from the offices of KUNM Public Radio at the
University of New Mexico.
In today’s world, it’s more important than ever to be media savvy and media literate. GJ thinks and works “outside of the box,” both in engaging young people and in applying their journalistic integrity to its advocacy and racial equity work.

*Generation Justice contact: Roberta Rael, roberta@generationjustice.org*

**Racial and Social Justice Program of the Delaware YWCA, Wilmington, Delaware**

The Racial & Social Justice program transforms communities by fostering awareness, promoting tolerance, and cultivating skills in individuals to advocate for justice and inspire a movement. The program launched a regional rapid response network in response to hate crimes, facilitates educational events, and helps drive policy changes to end institutional racism in Delaware.

We want to recognize the Racial & Social Justice program for its “rapid response” application of dialogue and the immediacy and pertinence of their new alert network. With their reach, mission, and infrastructure, they have a lot of potential to effect change nationwide.

*YWCA contact: Matthew Pillischer, mpillischer@ywcade.org*

**Rapid City Community Conversations, Rapid City, South Dakota**

Rapid City Community Conversations (RCCC) is a Native American-led, grassroots organization fostering a collaborative citizen and community leader dialogue, designing innovative approaches to reverse institutional and individual racism in Rapid City. Native and non-native citizens co-create a new community reflecting the shared values of honoring, respecting and keeping all people safe.

RCCC was chosen as a finalist because it demonstrates how a grassroots effort can lay the foundation for lasting change and racial equity, even while addressing some of the community’s most divisive issues. Their work to spread the concept that “we are all related” – humans, plants, earth, and sky sharing the same universe – has helped increase cultural understanding and shared community experiences.

*RCCC contact: Ramona Herrington, ramonaherrington@yahoo.com*

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