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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.

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/

**Honorees:**

Additional applicants are being recognized as for their execution of innovative and timely ideas
and their ability to inspire others, and whose accomplishments and body of work stands out in its
effectiveness in embodying Paul and Joyce’s vision and values. Honorable Mentions are being
awarded to S. Nadia Hussein of Bloomingsdale New Jersey; The Winchester Multicultural
Network of Winchester Massachusetts; and the West Virginia Center for Civic Life. Two
organizations were honored as Promising Practices: Speaking Down Barriers of Spartansburg
South Carolina, and WOKE of Greyslake Illinois.

**S. Nadia Hussain, Bloomingsdale, New Jersey**

In an effort to empower the women of Paterson’s Bangladeshi community, Nadia and other
female city residents have formed a new grassroots organization called the Bangladeshi
American Women’s Development Initiative. Their goal is to instill a “sense of sisterhood”
among the city’s Bangladeshi women and to break the barriers that have isolated some of them.
They also want to inform Bangladeshi women in Paterson about the educational, occupational
and social services available to them.

**Speaking Down Barriers, Spartanburg, South Carolina**

Speaking Down Barriers is a nonprofit organization that provides transformative dialogue,
training, and consultation on various college campuses, churches, youth programs, and to various
nonprofits, and schools. Their first gathering was held in November 2013 and they have since
hosted over 100 dialogues across North and South Carolina. Every month, Speaking Down Barriers holds 5 community gatherings for two Upstate communities in South Carolina to have deep, transformative dialogue across human differences of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national identity, and religion. They also offer training in dialogue and deep listening to colleges, nonprofits, and communities across the nation.

**West Virginia Center for Civic Life, Charleston, West Virginia**

For two decades, the WV Center for Civic Life has helped individuals, organizations and communities talk about difficult issues and act together to improve their quality of life. WVCCL-led coalitions have implemented many statewide dialogue-to-change initiatives on critical social and economic issues and have helped citizens build capacity to embed inclusive dialogue in community life. The Center has also built the capacity of new and existing leaders through the Civic Life Institute, training people to moderate discussions and bring diverse sectors, especially the unheard, to discussions on difficult issues.

**Winchester Multicultural Network, Winchester, Massachusetts**

The Winchester Multicultural Network (the “Network”) was founded over twenty-five years ago with the mission to promote the recognition, understanding and appreciation of diversity, to advocate for each and every person’s civil rights, and to confront intolerance. The Network provides a broad range of programs and offerings, including responding to and mediating incidents of bias and discrimination, supporting initiatives in the town’s public schools and local governments, and providing immigrant residents with social and cultural community-building programs and activities.

**Woke, Grayslake, Illinois**

The movement that would become “Woke” began around the time of the presidential election, when several students approached teachers to express concern about acts of hostility and micro-aggressions many students faced. They focused on a concept of “conversing, not convincing” understanding that “Woke” cannot just represent one side of the political spectrum and must be willing to have conversations even with people they disagree with. The students created a plan emphasizing four key areas: student voice, awareness of issues of diversity, training students in civil discourse, and providing professional development for staff. Approximately 30 students, 12 teachers (representing a variety of academic areas), six student services team members, and four administrators have actively participated in Woke activities throughout the year; the group hopes to expand its membership and activities in the coming year to continue to positively influence school culture.
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.

**Generation Justice, Albuquerque, New Mexico**

Generation Justice (GJ) is a nationally recognized, award-winning multi-media movement based 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 based in the University of New Mexico.

**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.

**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.

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