



## Announcing the Paul and Joyce Aicher Leadership in Democracy Award



We are pleased to announce the **first annual Paul and Joyce Aicher Leadership in Democracy Award**. This \$10,000 award will be given to an individual and/or organization that demonstrates the values on which Everyday Democracy was founded – voice, connection, racial equity, and community change.

For more than 25 years, Everyday Democracy has worked in communities across the country to foster a strong and vibrant democracy – one that is characterized by strong relationships across divides, leadership development, lifting up the voices of all people, and celebrating racial equity.

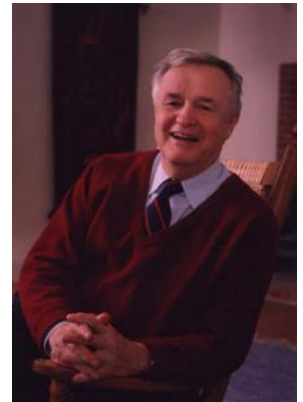
Paul and Joyce Aicher’s generosity and creative genius have had a profound impact on individuals and organizations in every part of this country. Their passion and diligent effort inspired the dialogue guides, organizing and facilitating training, and community coaching that Everyday Democracy is so well known for delivering.

Through this award, we will recognize the work of individuals and/or organizations across the U.S. for outstanding achievement in creating opportunities for people to talk to and listen to each other, work together for equitable communities, and help create a democracy that works for everyone.

To learn more about the history and work of Everyday Democracy, please visit [everyday-democracy.org](http://everyday-democracy.org).

### A brief history of Paul and Joyce Aicher

Paul J. Aicher’s motto, “Don’t just stand there, do something,” marked all that he did. Before founding the Study Circles Resource Center (now called Everyday Democracy) in 1989, he was a model for civic engagement. Shortly after graduating from Penn State, he participated in a discussion course which helped him find his voice in civic life and sparked his lifelong interest in helping others find their own. He saw a direct connection between his early experiences as a participant and a facilitator and his later vision for embedding these kinds of opportunities into American political life and culture.



Throughout his life, he spent his free time volunteering. Early in their marriage, he and his wife Joyce got involved with a refugee resettlement project in Illinois; Paul then served as president of the North Shore Human Relations Council. Back in Pennsylvania in the mid-1960s, he started the World Affairs Council of Berks County and led his neighbors in discussions of the “Great Decisions” guides published by the Foreign Policy Association. Through his long-time work and friendship with Homer Jack, an American Unitarian Universalist clergyman and social activist, Paul developed a passion for racial justice and international peace, both of which would inspire his later social action.

In the 1970s, he devoted his energies to launching his company Technical Materials and raising four children with Joyce. But he always returned to activism. In the early 1980s, after moving to Pomfret, Connecticut, Paul joined the local anti-nuclear freeze movement. In 1982, he formed the Topsfield Foundation, which was renamed The Paul J. Aicher Foundation after Paul’s passing in 2002.



It began with making grants to advance a number of causes: affordable housing; educating and engaging the public on international security issues; and networking grass-roots peace and justice groups across the U.S. As it became an operating foundation, it focused all of its efforts on its current mission – to strengthen deliberative democracy and improve the quality of life in the United States. In the past twenty-five years, it has been best known through the work of its primary project, Everyday Democracy, which supports communities across the U.S. in implementing Paul’s vision of public dialogue that enables everyone to have a voice and be heard. Joyce shared Paul’s commitment to civic engagement, community activism, and social justice. With her quiet strength and humor, she often worked behind the scenes to make the work of the Foundation possible. She also strengthened the local community through her numerous volunteer efforts. She and Paul shared a love of nature, books, and the arts and were self-effacing advocates of democratic values. Joyce passed away in 2016.

### **Who is eligible for the award?**

Individuals 16 years of age and older, coalitions, and organizations conducting projects in the U.S. are eligible to be nominated. Current Everyday Democracy employees and Board members are excluded from being nominated.

### **Award criteria**

The award will honor work that embodies Paul and Joyce Aicher’s values, such as the following:

- Creating welcoming opportunities for meaningful civic participation for all people
- Actively including people in civic life who have often been marginalized, and providing ways for them to develop their leadership capacities
- Building the capacity of existing community leaders to include others in community life
- Practicing the art of talking to each other and listening to each other
- Taking action that is grounded in crossing divides, and aimed at meaningful transformation in people, institutions, community culture, and governance
- Creating opportunities for empowered voice that is truly heard
- Addressing racial inequities through dialogue and collective action
- Showing the power of bridging all kinds of divides
- Making dialogue a regular part of how a community works and, ultimately, of how our democracy works

### **Nomination process**

Anyone may nominate any person or organization that meets the criteria for this award. The nomination form can be found here: [goo.gl/le6NDN](http://goo.gl/le6NDN) and must be received by 5pm EST on June 15, 2017.

Once Everyday Democracy receives a nomination, we will reach out to the individual or organization to let them know they were nominated and to ask if they would like to supplement the form with additional information for the committee to review. Submissions will be evaluated by a panel put together by Everyday Democracy.

Once a final decision is made, the winner and others will be notified during the month of August. They will be publicly recognized at a reception later in the year.