



# THE HEINZ AWARDS

for the Arts, Economy and Environment

EMBARGOED UNTIL  
Thursday, September 22, 2022

## **Heinz Family Foundation Names Anne Evens, Energy Equity Leader, and Rhett Ayers Butler, Founder of Global Environmental News Platform Mongabay, Recipients of the 27<sup>th</sup> Heinz Awards for the Environment**

**PITTSBURGH, September 22, 2022**—The Heinz Family Foundation today named Anne C. Evens, Ph.D., CEO of the nonprofit Elevate, and Rhett Ayers Butler, founder of the global environmental news platform Mongabay, the recipients of the prestigious 27<sup>th</sup> Heinz Award for the Environment. As part of the accolade, Dr. Evens and Mr. Butler will each receive an unrestricted cash award of \$250,000.

**Dr. Anne Evens** leads the Chicago-based organization [Elevate](#), which works to ensure equal access to climate solutions that provide clean and affordable heat, power and water in homes and communities. Although multifamily rentals comprise 30 million households in the U.S., the sector is least likely to have energy efficiency measures in place. With two-thirds of these households spending more than 50% of their income on housing, efficiency retrofits can be life-changing for families facing rising costs. Under the leadership of Dr. Evens, Elevate champions energy efficiency improvements in affordable housing and programs that advance renewable energy, water conservation, lead abatement and indoor air quality, primarily in multifamily buildings.

Dr. Evens has provided expert guidance to utility companies, local governments, housing developers, financial entities, nonprofits and public policy experts on strategies to substantially lower energy costs, develop clean energy and water programs to serve communities that have been under-resourced, preserve affordable housing and keep people in their homes. Over the last 20 years, Elevate has upgraded more than 116,000 housing units and 2,000 social service agency buildings with energy efficient retrofits; reduced carbon dioxide emissions by more than 213,000 tons; saved families more than \$94.4 million and created 1,181 clean energy jobs.

“Our work creates healthier homes, saves people money, keeps the utilities on and preserves affordable housing for people who need it most,” says Dr. Evens. “I think, especially after the past years of sheltering in place, it’s important to address the public health challenges within housing. I’m grateful for the staff and partners who make this work possible.”

In 2021, together with the Partnership for Southern Equity and others, Elevate launched the Justice40 Accelerator to support the Biden administration’s Justice40 Initiative, which aims to deliver federal climate resilience and clean energy investments to communities long burdened by pollution and underinvestment across the country. The accelerator helps local organizations apply for and receive funding. Elevate also developed LeadCare Illinois that provides free lead testing to 490 childcare providers, serving more than 10,000 children.

Working in collaboration with the Metropolitan Planning Council, Elevate issued the 2022 City of Chicago Water Affordability Analysis, which found that water burden—the percentage of a household’s income that goes toward paying water bills—in Chicago is high and significantly affects nonmetered, multifamily and non-white customers. Chicago’s lowest income households were impacted the most,

spending, on average, almost 10% of their income on their water bill—double the Environmental Protection Agency threshold of 4.5%. The report also found that Black, Latinx and Asian populations face, on average, a higher water burden while using comparatively less water than accounts in majority white census tracts.

In September 2021, after several years of advocacy on the part of Dr. Evens, Elevate and others, Illinois passed the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act. This legislation supports the state’s move toward 100% clean energy, invests in training a diverse workforce for a clean energy economy and institutes key ratepayer and residential customer protections.

“Anne is honored for her dedication to ensuring that the fundamental services so many of us take for granted—clean water, heat and power for our homes—are accessible and affordable to all,” says Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “We recognize her not only for her compassion and persistence in bringing to light the inequities that for too long have been inherent in our housing systems, but most importantly for developing solutions that keep vulnerable families in their homes while reducing environmental impact. Under her leadership, Elevate is demonstrating that energy burden can be reduced in our communities, to the benefit of people and planet.”

Journalist and entrepreneur **Rhett Ayers Butler** receives the Heinz Award for the Environment for his work as founder of [Mongabay](#), a global nonprofit environmental science and conservation news platform that produces original reporting in 10 languages by leveraging over 800 correspondents in some 70 countries. Mongabay produces meticulously researched, evidence-based news and investigative pieces, and as a result is a powerful, trusted and credible source giving voice and agency to frontline communities and ecosystems facing threats from development and deforestation.

Mongabay’s coverage has sparked law enforcement actions and investigations, influenced investments and halted deforestation and other illegal practices. Reporting by journalists—who often work at great personal risk—has had widespread impact. Stories have prompted pushback against illegal logging in Madagascar and exposed questionable practices of oil palm development and land conversion in Cameroon. Mongabay reporters have exposed an illegal airstrip in Guatemala’s Laguna del Tigre National Park, an international jaguar fang trafficking network in Bolivia, corruption among Chile’s Rapa Nui National Park managers on Easter Island and illegal mining in the Peruvian Amazon.

“From climate change to environmental degradation to extinction, we face daunting planetary challenges. To effectively address these collective problems, we need more actionable information to reach the right people at the right time. At Mongabay we work to drive impact through credible independent journalism that delivers news and inspiration from nature’s frontline,” says Mr. Butler. “While it is a difficult time to be doing this work due to rising threats against journalists and media organizations, access to reliable information is critically important to help people make sense of the world around them and inform decision-making. In bleak times, it’s also essential to instill a sense of purpose and agency: People do matter and the actions they take can make a difference. For that reason, we make a concerted effort to cover solutions that offer hope about more sustainable paths forward.”

Other examples of notable work include an exposé revealing illegal forest clearing practices by United Cacao in the Peruvian Amazon. Working with NASA and the World Resources Institute, Mongabay gathered satellite imagery of the improper land conversion. Despite legal threats, the story was published

and then elevated by other media outlets and advocacy organizations, resulting in the delisting of United Cacao from the London Stock Exchange.

“The pace of environmental degradation, deforestation and habitat loss due to human activity is devastating, but Rhett has responded with courage and dedication, creating a platform that equips the world with critical news information gathered with the highest journalistic and scientific integrity,” says Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “Working at the intersection of human rights and the environment, Mongabay journalists are holding those responsible for natural resource management accountable, prompting investors to more closely examine financial investments and contributing to the prevention of deforestation. Now more than ever, the world needs individuals who are willing to take on what may seem like insurmountable challenges to protect our precious natural resources. We honor Rhett for his fearlessness and for inspiring in others a joyful appreciation for our natural world and a commitment to protecting the planet that we share.”

In addition to Mongabay, Mr. Butler has created several free platforms that serve as hubs to celebrate and protect species and spaces at risk, including [wildmadagascar.org](http://wildmadagascar.org), [kids.mongabay.com](http://kids.mongabay.com) and [rainforests.mongabay.com](http://rainforests.mongabay.com). In 2008, he co-founded the open-source journal *Tropical Conservation Science*.

Created to honor the memory of the late U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards celebrate excellence and achievement in areas of great importance to Senator Heinz. The 27<sup>th</sup> awards bring the total number of recipients to 165 and reflect more than \$30 million in awards given since the program was launched in 1993.

**Additional recipients by category are:**

**Arts: vanessa l. german, Visual Artist and Founder, ARThouse, Pittsburgh, Pa.,** is a visual and performance artist whose assemblage sculpture, installations, spoken-word poetry and community-based work confront racism, violence, homophobia and hate, while simultaneously providing affirmation and optimism. A self-described “citizen artist,” she also provides spaces for collective healing and creative expression in Homewood, a Pittsburgh community acutely affected by disinvestment.

**Arts: Cauleen Smith, Visual Artist, Los Angeles, Calif.,** is an interdisciplinary artist and educator whose experimental films, installations and multimedia works push the boundaries of film, blending moving images with painting, textiles and more to create immersive experiences. Drawing from structuralism, Third World Cinema and science fiction, Ms. Smith’s works reflect on history and the power of community and culture.

**Economy (shared award): Hilary A. Abell, Co-Founder, Project Equity, Guerneville, Calif., and Alison Lingane, Co-Founder, Project Equity, Oakland, Calif.,** are leaders in the movement to advance employee ownership as an exit strategy for business owners, and as a proven approach for increasing employee engagement, satisfaction and economic well-being. Project Equity provides hands-on consulting and support to companies that want to transition to employee ownership while partnering with city and state governments and federal agencies to advance awareness, uptake and financing.

**Economy: Chrystal A. Cornelius, President and CEO, Oweesta Corporation, Longmont, Colo.,** works to return wealth to Native lands and people, addressing centuries of disenfranchisement that have led to profound socioeconomic disparities for Native communities. A community development financial institution (CDFI) intermediary, Oweesta provides financial products and development services exclusively to Native CDFIs and Native communities to help residents repair their credit, open new businesses and obtain assistance for home down payments.

Recipients of the 27<sup>th</sup> Heinz Awards will be honored at a virtual event in October. For more information on the awardees, visit [www.heinzawards.org](http://www.heinzawards.org).

EDITORS/REPORTERS: To obtain photos of the recipients, please contact Maya Brod at [mbrod@burness.com](mailto:mbrod@burness.com) or 301-467-4917.

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### **About the Heinz Awards**

Established by Teresa Heinz in 1993 to honor the memory of her late husband, U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards celebrate the accomplishments and spirit of the Senator by recognizing the extraordinary achievements of individuals in the areas of greatest importance to him. The Awards, administered by the Heinz Family Foundation, currently recognize individuals for their contributions in the areas of the **Arts**, the **Economy** and the **Environment**. Nominations are submitted by invited experts, who serve anonymously, and are reviewed by jurors appointed by the Heinz Family Foundation. The jurors make recommendations to the Board of Directors, which subsequently selects the Award recipients. For more information on the Heinz Awards, visit [www.heinzawards.org](http://www.heinzawards.org).

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