



# THE HEINZ AWARDS

for the Arts, Economy and Environment

EMBARGOED UNTIL  
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## **Creating Opportunities for Families and Building Economic Mobility: Heinz Family Foundation Names Aisha Nyandoro, Jessica Sager and Janna Wagner Recipients of the 29<sup>th</sup> Heinz Awards for the Economy**

**PITTSBURGH, September 17, 2024** — The Heinz Family Foundation today named Aisha Nyandoro, Ph.D., Founding CEO of Springboard to Opportunities, and Jessica Sager, J.D., and Janna Wagner, Co-Founders of All Our Kin, recipients of the prestigious 29<sup>th</sup> Heinz Award in the Economy category. As part of the accolade, Dr. Nyandoro will receive and Ms. Sager and Ms. Wagner will share unrestricted cash awards of \$250,000.

**Aisha Nyandoro, Ph.D.**, a national leader in the guaranteed income movement, is recognized for her dedication to developing programs that improve the quality of life for communities and individuals with limited resources — particularly mothers and their families — exit poverty.

She helped found Springboard to Opportunities (Springboard), which connects families living in federally subsidized affordable housing with resources to help them thrive economically. Using a “radically resident-driven” approach, Springboard works with families to address challenges — particularly economic barriers to mobility — and to design programs to help them achieve their goals.

In 2018, Dr. Nyandoro launched Magnolia Mother’s Trust (MMT), the first guaranteed income program for Black mothers in the U.S. MMT has since inspired dozens of programs throughout the country, including Project Home in Maine, Mother Up in Washington, D.C., and In Her Hands in Georgia.

MMT provides \$1,000 per month to select residents in federally subsidized housing communities supported by Springboard. The cash support is for one year, with no strings attached, essentially doubling the income of recipients. The program, which started with 20 mothers selected by lottery, has expanded to include more than 430 since the program’s start. MMT offers social services and enrichment experiences for both mothers and children and further invests in families by setting up a 529 education savings account with \$1,000 for each participant’s school-age child. The program also provides mothers with the opportunity to opt in to a built-in savings plan.

Studies of MMT outcomes point to the effectiveness of cash programs:

- The percentage of mothers able to pay all bills on time increased from 27% to 83%.
- Mothers who felt they had enough money for food rose from 64% to 81%.
- Families with emergency savings rose from 40% to 88%.
- Families with health insurance rose by 25%.
- Children were 20% more likely to perform above grade level in school.

Dr. Nyandoro’s advocacy work and MMT’s success have informed national policy initiatives such as the expanded Child Tax Credit, our country’s single-most effective tool for alleviating child poverty.

“My work may seem like it’s solely about financial security, but that is only one piece of the puzzle,” says Dr. Nyandoro. “What I’m really aiming to do in providing Black women experiencing poverty with resources is to shift deeply held, harmful narratives about who is deserving of dignity and trust in this country. That goal not only informs how our policies are shaped, but it is also transformative for the individual. Mothers in this program believe in themselves, because it is the first time someone has believed in them. And that is invaluable.”

To share her expertise, Dr. Nyandoro co-founded and co-chairs the Guaranteed Income Community of Practice, which convenes policy experts, advocates, researchers, funders, practitioners and elected officials to learn and collaborate on unconditional cash programs. She has testified before Congress and contributed to “An Economy for All: Building a ‘Black Women Best’ Legislative Agenda,” the 2022 report from the Congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls.

“Through her work with Springboard and Magnolia Mother’s Trust, Aisha is dismantling a pervasive mindset of dismissive antipathy toward those struggling to overcome generational poverty, particularly single Black mothers and their children,” says Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “We honor Aisha for her commitment to empowering women to articulate the complex barriers they face in pursuing economic stability and the solutions that would have the greatest impact. In listening to their voices and fighting for a new narrative, Aisha regularly encounters injustice and prejudice, but she persists with grace, tenacity and courage, advocating for women and children at both the state and federal level. My late husband, John Heinz, was known for his respect for human dignity and for living his guiding principle: ‘the status quo is unacceptable.’ This principle is amplified in Aisha’s courage and persistence in pursuing a better life for the women and families she serves.”

**Jessica Sager, J.D., and Janna Wagner**, founders of All Our Kin, receive the Heinz Award for their work in training, supporting and sustaining family child care educators. All Our Kin arms these home-based providers with the resources and community connections they need to create quality early childhood environments and run successful small businesses.

Ms. Sager was in Yale Law School and Ms. Wagner was an educator when they founded All Our Kin in 1999 as a laboratory school in New Haven, Connecticut. Galvanized by the stringent conditions imposed on working parents by welfare reform in the 90s, Ms. Sager and Ms. Wagner, along with community leaders and parents, realized that family child care (also known as home-based care), provided an avenue for mothers to open licensed programs in their homes, allowing them to care for their own children and contribute to their communities.

Over the years, All Our Kin evolved and expanded to meet the changing national landscape and the needs of families and providers. The lab school became the prototype for a staffed family child care network model, with sites in New Haven, Bridgeport and Stamford/Norwalk, eventually expanding to New York City.

While the organization still provides comprehensive direct support to family child care educators, including licensing assistance, business courses and educational training, and coaching in English and Spanish, All Our Kin now has more than 95 state and local partners in 29 states and has reached over 12,000 educators and 60,000 children nationwide through training and technical assistance.

Studies show that All Our Kin has raised the quality, availability and sustainability of child care where the organization has provided direct service, including in communities with a chronic lack of public investment. These supports can increase the earning power of family child care educators. Within one year of completing All Our Kin’s licensing or business programs, the majority of providers increase their earnings by \$5,000 or more, and the vast majority say the quality of their lives has improved.

Family child care programs, or home-based programs, offer flexible, neighborhood-based care that is often culturally and linguistically responsive. Parents often rely on family child care, particularly for their infants and toddlers, because of the intimate, homelike setting. All Our Kin refers to providers as educators, acknowledging the critical role they play in developing our youngest learners.

In addition to providing direct service, training and technical assistance, All Our Kin advocates for fair compensation of family child care educators. It also ensures they are at the forefront of policy discussions — something that is critically necessary, given that nationally, family child care educators, who on average work 56 hours a week, earn \$29,377 a year (or roughly \$10 an hour). Among these, 30% rely on at least one other job to make ends meet.

“All Our Kin is so much more than a business model,” says Ms. Sager. “Numbers don’t drive our economy — people do. When we provide quality child care to families in their own communities, when we make sure educators have the tools to run a business and when we advocate for those educators to get a living wage, everyone wins. Children are supported, parents can work and the economy thrives.”

Independent analyses have shown that All Our Kin’s work is generating higher income for providers and high scores on assessments that measure quality in family child care settings, which have been shown to correlate strongly with positive outcomes for children in terms of cognitive, social and emotional skill development and their attitudes toward learning. A study conducted by the Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis at the University of Connecticut found that for every dollar All Our Kin spends in programming, it results in \$15-\$20 of macro-economic benefit.

“From birth to 3 years old, children’s brains develop at an unbelievable rate,” adds Ms. Wagner. “Understanding how to make the most of these rich opportunities requires dedication and expertise. Whether it’s through educational coaching, training on social-emotional development or preparing for national accreditation, All Our Kin supports home-based educators who want to see young children develop and thrive.”

“We honor Jessica and Janna for their steadfast dedication to uplifting and supporting the women who provide critically needed, home-based child care in our communities, as well as the families who depend on that care,” says Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “We have long known that the preschool years are pivotal to childhood development, and it is unconscionable that for so many, access to quality early-learning environments continues to be limited by a family’s income, the neighborhood in which they live, or the hours they work. By recognizing the importance of home-based care, Jessica and Janna are equipping caregivers to succeed as business owners, changing how we value and compensate those who care for our youngest children, and demanding that we recognize that accessibility to early child care is essential to our economy as a whole and to the financial stability of families. Most importantly, their work is helping to move us to a world in which parents do not have to choose between providing for their families and caring for their children.”

All Our Kin has advocated on issues such as local zoning and licensure regulations and provided guidance to community leaders. Their report, “Creating the Conditions,” includes activities such as conducting a landscape scan of family child care policies, designing a tailored policy agenda and making progress on policy issues in partnership with educators. Ms. Sager and Ms. Wagner co-teach the education studies seminar “Child Care, Society and Public Policy” at Yale to share knowledge and experience, as well as the policy and practice of early childhood education with students.

“We have already proven that vibrant family child care networks can transform communities and local economies. Now we’re scaling that work to transform the country,” says Ms. Sager. “Through our collaborations directly with educators in Connecticut and New York and our training and technical assistance in over half of the U.S., we envision a country where family child care is recognized and celebrated for the high-quality, economy-boosting powerhouse that it is.”

Created to honor the memory of the late U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards honors excellence and achievement in areas of great importance to him. The 29<sup>th</sup> Awards brings the total number of recipients to 180 and reflects \$37 million in monetary awards since the program was launched in 1993.

**Additional recipients by category are:**

**Arts: Jennie C. Jones, Sonic and Visual Artist, Hudson, New York**, creates works of painting, collage, sculpture and sound that engage with the history of American modernism and minimalism while investigating the era’s avant-garde music.

**Arts: Gala Porras-Kim, Visual Artist, Los Angeles, California**, creates work spanning drawings, sculptures and installations that challenges institutions to reassess their role as stewards of history and culture. Through artworks that are often informed by direct engagement with museums and their staff, she aims to shift policies regarding the ownership of objects.

**Environment: Scott Loarie, Ph.D., and Ken-ichi Ueda, Co-Organizers, iNaturalist, San Rafael, California**, have galvanized millions of nature enthusiasts, researchers and conservation biologists to record and map nature observations across the planet through iNaturalist. Together, observers crowdsource one of the world’s largest biodiversity databases that has contributed to thousands of publications and led to the discovery of new species.

**Environment: Amira Diamond and Melinda Kramer, Co-Founders, Women’s Earth Alliance (WEA), Berkeley, California**, are working to protect the environment, end the climate crisis and ensure a just, thriving world by empowering women-led climate initiatives. These partnerships are helping to protect forests and rivers, save threatened indigenous seeds, launch sustainable farms, conserve coral reefs and protect land rights.

Recipients of the 29<sup>th</sup> Heinz Awards will be honored in Pittsburgh 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 Abby Manishor at [amanishor@burness.com](mailto:amanishor@burness.com) or 917-539-3308.

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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 celebrates 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 Environment, and the Economy. 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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