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22nd Heinz Awards Honors Angela Blanchard for Creating New Model to Develop, Transform, Empower Economically Disadvantaged Communities

Blanchard's proven approach equips low-income and immigrant communities with the tools to thrive economically and socially, and draws its ideas, strength and direction from the people served

PITTSBURGH, September 14, 2017—The Heinz Family Foundation today named Angela Blanchard the recipient of the 22nd Heinz Award in the Human Condition category. Ms. Blanchard is honored for creating a transformative model of community development that recognizes the inherent strengths of the people residing in low-income and immigrant communities. The approach, known as Appreciative Community Building, involves residents in the process of identifying the strengths and aspirations of their community and then works with residents to develop programs and services that build upon those existing assets.

As part of the accolade, Ms. Blanchard will receive an unrestricted cash award of \$250,000.

Developed in her more than 30 years of leadership at the nonprofit BakerRipley (formerly known as Neighborhood Centers) in Houston, Texas, Ms. Blanchard's approach has guided the establishment of two major community centers and continues to impact Texans at BakerRipley's more than 60 service sites. Despite challenging economic times, the agency has grown every year for the past 25 years and now directly serves over half a million people annually.

“Our approach stems from our confidence that the people we are working with have aspirations of their own that should be honored, and that they have their own deeply held beliefs about how to move forward,” said Ms. Blanchard. “Appreciative Community Building for us means standing side-by-side with people, and working with them on that which is most important to them—the things that keep them up at night and get them up in the morning. We have made it our practice to look at every community for what gives it life and energy, what is whole and what is strong. When we go in, we take out a giant magnifying glass and put it right over where that community is at its best, where the individuals there are at their best. We believe the leaders we need are already here so we work to identify and engage the people who genuinely care about their neighbors. Those are the people we work with; those are the ideas that we invest in. That is also what makes the work lasting and sustainable, because people will support that which they helped create.”

For three decades, Ms. Blanchard has had a front row seat for the most dramatic demographic shift of any major city in the United States. Houston has become the nation's new Ellis Island, welcoming those displaced from all over the world. As the President and CEO of BakerRipley, the largest community development organization in the state of Texas, Ms. Blanchard has been building on-ramps for newly arrived people to thrive in a region where 70 percent of the people were born elsewhere and one-fourth of the city is foreign-born. BakerRipley is developing solutions to challenges the rest of the United States will face in the next decade. The proven success of BakerRipley in creating welcoming, thriving

communities has created a powerful model for cities across the globe facing the complex challenge of community transformation.

Like others committed to community transformation, Ms. Blanchard is aware our collective future depends on the strength of connections between neighbors.

“Despite the rhetoric around immigration, the reality is that in the many major cities I’ve visited and where I’ve been called to share our model, I have seen consistently that in places of worship, in neighborhoods and in schools, people are actually welcoming one another and getting to know one another,” said Ms. Blanchard. “People don’t see immigrants as a threat—that’s something that they’ve read in a headline. They see a vague group of people that they’ve never met as a threat, but they see the people next to them as neighbors. It’s up to cities to say to the world, no, this actually works, and makes us stronger, and it makes us healthier. It’s better for the economy and for the country that we are connected.”

“Many of us go our whole lives and never have to start over with a blank sheet of paper. But those people that do, that’s really something that we all need to pay attention to. Seeing people come in having very little, and then helping them find a way to recreate a new life out of their own imagination—that is the most riveting thing on earth to me. That’s what I’ll be spending the rest of my life on.”

Among the newer programs developed during Ms. Blanchard’s leadership at BakerRipley is ASPIRE, a public-private workforce initiative designed to address the shortage of middle skills—jobs that require skills training but do not require a college degree. Although its population continues to grow, Houston has an underemployment problem. Many people work two or three jobs, yet still live in poverty. ASPIRE’s goal is to train low-wage workers in middle-skill jobs, which pay a living wage. With many energy industry and other large companies headquartered in the region, middle-skill workers such as carpenters, welders, machinery mechanics, electricians and plumbers are needed. ASPIRE links employers and training providers with Houstonians wanting to learn a trade.

“Ms. Blanchard’s approach to community development reminds us that those we set out to help, whether they are looking to begin a new life in America, or seeking to overcome circumstances that have left them at an economic disadvantage, have much to contribute when given the right tools and opportunities,” said Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “Through her community development work, she has modeled how cities can benefit and thrive when they learn to see those looking to build a bright future for themselves and their families as welcomed members of the community, rather than problems to be solved. Her strategies have helped thousands move up the economic and education ladders, benefiting themselves and their communities, and creating a pathway for new generations to achieve even greater success.”

Ms. Blanchard is regularly called on to share the Appreciative Community Building model with cities around the world that are seeking a more inclusive, holistic approach and looking to learn from what has been accomplished in Houston. Closer to home, during Hurricane Harvey, Ms. Blanchard was asked by government officials to take the lead on establishing and managing the largest shelter in Houston for those impacted by the storm. In a matter of hours, Ms. Blanchard mobilized staff, volunteers and other public/private sector partners to welcome displaced neighbors and help them begin the difficult journey forward.

Established to honor the memory of U.S. Senator John Heinz, the 22nd Heinz Awards program this year recognizes those who have made significant contributions in five distinct areas of great importance to Senator Heinz: Arts and Humanities; Environment; Human Condition; Public Policy; and Technology, the Economy and Employment. The Heinz Awards has recognized 133 individuals and awarded more than \$26 million to the honorees. For more information, visit <http://heinzawards.net/2017>.

In addition to Ms. Blanchard, the 22nd Heinz Awards honored the following individuals, who will receive their awards in Pittsburgh on October 18, 2017:

- **Arts and Humanities: Natasha Trethewey, Evanston, Illinois**
- **Environment: Gregory Asner, Ph.D, Stanford, California**
- **Public Policy: Mona Hanna-Attisha, M.D., Flint, Michigan**
- **Technology, the Economy and Employment: Joseph DeSimone, Ph.D., Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and Redwood City, California**

EDITORS/REPORTERS: To obtain photos of Ms. Blanchard or any of the other recipients, please contact Abby Manishor at 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, recognize individuals for their contributions in the areas of Arts and Humanities; Environment; Human Condition; Public Policy; and Technology, the Economy and Employment. 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.net.

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