



# JEFFERSON AWARDS FOUNDATION

Arena Theater at the Mead Center  
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## 42<sup>ND</sup> JEFFERSON AWARDS CELEBRATE THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

*National Honorees include former United States Representative Gabrielle Giffords, retired NFL wide receiver James Thrash, Scientist/Cancer Researcher Jack Andraka, Donorschoose.org founder Charles Best, and Dr. Pedro Jose Greer, Jr.*

*Other individual awardees recognized through the Lead360 Challenge, for public service benefitting local communities, and service by an employee, high school, and young American*

*Awards ceremony includes performances by NFL and Howard University choir members*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 18)** – The nation’s highest honor for community service is being awarded to five extraordinary individuals and organizations whose selfless, noble and compassionate work has improved the lives of countless people and amplified our nation’s collective commitment to helping one another and contributing to the larger good.

Co-founded in 1972 by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, U.S. Senator Robert Taft, Jr. and Sam Beard, the Jefferson Awards Foundation is the country’s longest standing and most prestigious organization dedicated to activating and celebrating public service. Through its programs, the Foundation trains and empowers individuals to serve and lead in their communities, magnifying their impact through a vast network of media partners, mentors and volunteers. Each year, the Foundation honors the most outstanding achievements in public service at the Jefferson Awards National Ceremonies.

This year’s Jefferson Awards – now in their 42<sup>ND</sup> year – recognize contributions to service in five separate categories, including: Greatest Public Service by an Elected or Appointed Official; Outstanding Service in Professional Sports; Greatest Public Service by an Individual 35 or Under; Greatest Public Service by a Private Citizen; and Greatest Public Service Benefiting the

Disadvantaged, as well as additional honors for youth and other “unsung” heroes throughout the nation.

“Each year, we gather in our nation’s capital to recognize civic leaders who have exemplified the spirit of public service,” said Joseph N. Sanberg, Chairman of the Jefferson Awards Foundation. “By doing so, we honor the millions of other Americans who offer their time, their talents and their resources to the selfless cause of making others’ lives better. No matter the size of the effort, making a positive difference in another person’s life is a cause for celebration, and it brings great satisfaction to all of us to see the Jefferson Awards Foundation’s message of public service be such an integral part of community-building across this great country.”

The Jefferson Awards ceremonies will feature a special performance by The Original NFL Gospel Choir, comprised exclusively of NFL alumni and led by former defensive back for the Los Angeles Rams, Buffalo Bills and Indianapolis Colts and current lead singer for the Miracles, Syd Justin. In addition, the Howard Gospel Choir, comprised of more than 70 Howard University students and alumni, under the direction of 2013 Howard University graduate Reginald Golden, will also perform.

The Jefferson Awards Foundation is committed to tapping into the incredible capacity and spirit of young people. Through its Students In Action, Lead360 Challenge, and GlobeChangers programs the Foundation supports, trains and empowers today’s youth to be leaders, problem solvers, entrepreneurs and impactful global citizens. In addition to identifying and celebrating unsung heroes serving in communities across the country, the Foundation partners with 23 prestigious corporate and university Champions to build a culture of service in workplaces and on campuses.

**The 2014 Jefferson Awards honorees are:**

**U. S. Senator John Heinz Award for Greatest Public Service by an Elected Official**

*Hon. Gabrielle Giffords, U.S. House of Representatives (Arizona), Ret.*

The Honorable Gabrielle Giffords is nominated for a 2014 Jefferson Award for her ongoing commitment to public service.

In 2006, Giffords became the third woman in Arizona's history to be elected to serve in the U.S. Congress. Prior to serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, Giffords served in the Arizona House of Representatives from 2001 until 2003 and the Arizona State Senate from 2003 until 2005, when she resigned to run for the congressional seat held by then-U.S. Representative Jim Kolbe.

As a Member of Congress, Giffords was leading champion for solar energy, border security, and military families and veterans. During her time in Congress, she was consistently ranked as one of the most centrist legislators in the U.S. House of Representatives.

### **All-Star Recipient: Outstanding Service in Professional Sports**

#### *James Thrash, Former NFL Wide Receiver*

After 12 seasons as a wide receiver with the Washington Redskins and Philadelphia Eagles, Thrash transitioned to the role of heading player development for the Redskins during the 2009 season. His responsibilities included coordinating an internship program that assists players in locating and securing opportunities to help them earn practical job experience that may lead to a second career, acting as a counselor to both rookies and veterans, as well as working with players and their families on financial programs and continuing education initiatives.

He is being honored for his commitment to achieve excellence off the field by building better communities and stronger families.

Thrash currently spends his time motivating and inspiring various groups of people. He speaks to school groups on the importance of leadership and character, as well as, teaching life skills to youth and adults. As a committee member of Beat The Odds, a project initiated to celebrate the positive potential of young people, Thrash successfully encouraged 12 local high schools to join the program. Thrash also sits on the board of the Good Shepherd Alliance, a non-profit organization that provides emergency food, clothing, and shelter along with assistance to help homeless women and families become self-sufficient.

**Samuel S. Beard Award for Greatest Public Service by an Individual 35 or Under**

***Jack Andraka, Inventor, Scientist and Cancer Researcher***

Jack Andraka is nominated for a 2014 Jefferson Award for his work in developing a new, effective, and inexpensive method for detecting pancreatic cancer. Following his uncle's death from pancreatic cancer, Andraka decided while sitting in biology class to develop a new method for early detection of pancreatic cancer using carbon nanotubes.

Andraka contacted two hundred professors from Johns Hopkins University with a plan and budget for his project in order to receive laboratory help. After nearly two hundred rejection letters, he received a positive reply from Dr. Anirban Maitra, a professor of pathology, oncology, and chemical and biomolecular engineering at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

The result of the project was a new dipstick type diagnostic test for pancreatic cancer using a novel paper sensor that is, according to him, 168 times faster, 26,000 times less expensive (costing around three cents), and over 400 times more sensitive than the current diagnostic tests. He says the test is also effective for ovarian and lung cancer. Professor Anirban Maitra has been quoted as telling her students, "Think of Thomas Edison and the light bulb. This kid (Andraka) is the Edison of our times. There are going to be a lot of light bulbs coming from him."

**S. Roger Horchow Award for Greatest Public Service by a Private Citizen**

***Charles Best, Founder and CEO, DonorsChoose.org***

Charles Best is nominated for a 2014 Jefferson Award for founding and leading the internet-based non-profit DonorsChoose. DonorsChoose.org is a web-based charitable marketplace where teachers post their needs and where donors can choose to invest in those that appeal to them, successfully providing students in need with resources that our public schools often lack. Since the website's inception, over 536,000 donors have raised more than \$85 million, supporting roughly 208,000 school projects and helping in excess of five million students.

Charles Best saw first-hand the scarcity of materials in our public school classrooms and its profound impact on kids' education. Looking for a way to address this problem, he decided to start a website that would allow private donors to improve education in a meaningful, concrete way by sponsoring requests for classroom resources – “the *eBay* of philanthropy.” Best posted his proposal online – along with those of his fellow teachers – and anonymous donors sponsored all 11 initial requests.

Since a modest start in 2000, the website, [www.donorschoose.org](http://www.donorschoose.org), has taken off. Recently funded requests have ranged from classroom libraries to digital cameras to a sensory garden designed for mentally-handicapped children. In 2010, DonorsChoose.org grew to 250,000 donors, who gave roughly \$30 million to support 60,000 classroom projects, delivering more than \$22,000,000 worth of resources to students in public schools.

### **Greatest Public Service Benefiting the Disadvantaged**

*Dr. Pedro Jose Greer Jr., Founder, Camillus Health Concern and Founder,  
St. John Bosco Clinic*

Dr. Pedro José Greer Jr has worked on behalf of the poor and homeless living in the city of Miami. A physician and the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs at the Florida International University School of Medicine, where he also serves as Chairman of the Department of Humanities, Health and Society. Dr. Greer is the founder of Camillus Health Concern, an agency that provides medical care to over 10,000 homeless patients each year in the city of Miami, and St. John Bosco Clinic, which provides basic primary medical care to disadvantaged children and adults in the Little Havana community.

In addition to Dr. Greer’s extensive charitable activity, he also serves as Assistant Dean for Homeless Education at the University of Miami School of Medicine and Chairman of Digestive Management of Mercy Hospital, where he maintains a private practice with his father. He is also Medical Director of Mercy Mission Services and has served as an advisor to both the administrations of U.S. President George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

## **LEAD360**

*The LEAD360 Challenge, formerly known as the Youth Service Challenge, recognizes individuals, schools, clubs, and faith-based or other organizations that work with kids. Five Finalists compete in a social media voting contest. 76,000 people voted, Emma Rider won the most amount of votes.*

### ***Emma Rider, Quenching Souls***

Following a mission trip to Africa, Emma Rider was inspired to create a shoe drive to help fund clean water initiatives. Quenching Souls has not only collected more than 80,000 pairs of shoes, but has kept 40 tons of shoes out of landfills. The proceeds have funded clean water for 37 communities around the world.

## **Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Award Recipients**

*Presented to five “Unsung Heroes” for their extraordinary and selfless volunteer work in their community, nominated by a Jefferson Awards Foundation media partners.*

### ***Jeremiah Anthony (Nominated by KCRG-TV9 & The Gazette, Cedar Rapids, IA)***

In 2011, due to rising concerns about cyber-bullying in eastern Iowa, Jeremiah Anthony created a Twitter account called @westhighbros. Using this account, he started sending compliments to students at his school. Students who received tweets gave such positive feedback, Jeremiah was inspired to expand his activities.

Jeremiah invited some of his close friends at Iowa City’s West High School to tweet with him. Soon they were tweeting not just students at West High, but teachers and other members of the community. @WestHighBros has delivered their compliments in more than 4,500 tweets so far. Today there are anti-cyber bullying initiatives inspired by @westhighbros in 20 countries and in 16 languages.

Every week Jeremiah spends 2-3 hours communicating through @westhighbros with teens contemplating suicide, trying to convince them to not do so. According to him one of the highlights of his junior year was when one girl approached him in the lunch-line at the school cafeteria, and

told him that at the time that she got his tweet the week before, she was seriously contemplating suicide, but after reading the positive message in it, she decided to live on.

***Michelle Lacourciere (Nominated by KPIX-TV & KCBS Radio, San Francisco, CA)***

After visiting rural Haiti on a business trip and witnessing poverty at its worst, Michelle Lacourciere returned home to launch a small, sustainable biofuel program to help Haitian farmers. After an earthquake devastated the island nation in January 2010, using her contacts, Lacourciere helped organize the largest earthquake relief effort in the Bay Area.

The project spurred her on to tackle one of that country's biggest issues – energy. The centerpiece of her sustainable energy solution is a solar generator, a 1.5 kilowatt solar array designed to charge portable battery packs, each of which can charge cell phones and light a home for 5 to 7 days before recharging. These battery packs can power 100 homes at a cost of just \$6/month – what an average Haitian family spends for kerosene. Lacourciere's non-profit organization, called Sirona Cares, currently operates 14 generators and battery packs, serving 7,000 people.

***Shawn and Amanda Bakker, (Nominated by KSBW-TV, Salinas, CA)***

Beginning in September 2012, Shawn and Amanda Bakker set out to create an all-inclusive playground to provide a recreational and educational space for children with physical limitations, like their daughter, Tatum, who has spina bifida. What started out as a very personal mission has drawn over 3,000 volunteers came from all parts of the county to help build the park.

Efforts commenced with Amanda Bakker presenting a park plan to the City of Salinas on March 27, 2013. The city responded with unanimous approval, offering up a four-acre, rundown and dormant parking lot that had not been used for over 40 years. Working with City of Salinas Mayor Joseph Gunter, they secured a long-term rental agreement and opened a relationship with the city's approval agencies. The Bakkers then began a fundraising campaign with a press release on April 19, 2013, and worked tirelessly to head the overall effort, raise funds, and help build the playground.

The Bakkers were told it would take five years to get the land, secure the building permits, and raise the money. Against all odds, they made it happen in only 14 months. Now, children from many

backgrounds and abilities are learning about each other through play, helping to build a more integrated community. In all, the community of Salinas contributed \$1.2 million, and had over 3,000 volunteers give countless hours to make it happen. Salinas now has a destination playground, available to all children.

*Eric Fuchs-Stengel (Nominated by New Jersey Star-Ledger, NJ)*

Eric Fuchs-Stengel is the Founder and Executive Director of MEVO, an environmental not-for-profit organization in Northern New Jersey. As MEVO's leader for the past five years, Eric has engaged over 1,500 volunteers, primarily students, in carrying out environmental sustainability projects. Cumulatively, these volunteers have carried out over 20,000 hours of volunteer work throughout New York and New Jersey. In addition, MEVO has planned over 120 public volunteer events, carrying out projects ranging from large-scale illegal trash dump clean-ups to building ecology centers at elementary schools. He has engaged hundreds of people in environmental service and has inspired thousands more to take action for the environment.

Eric founded MEVO when he was sixteen years old, kicking off an array of volunteer initiatives involving high school and college students he trains, educates and empowers. These events include the removal of thousands of pounds of trash and recycling and over 2,000 tires from Northern New Jersey communities and the creation/rehabilitation of hiking trails. MEVO has distributed over 270 homemade recycling bins to schools and communities, preventing 700 cubic feet of methane from entering the atmosphere each year. MEVO also distributed 2,609 compact fluorescent light bulbs to homes and planted 65 trees, removing 500 tons (135 cars) of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the atmosphere.

In addition, MEVO has built and currently maintains large organic community gardens that have produced over four hundred pounds of organic produce, which is donated to local hunger organizations. Eric and his volunteers use these gardens to provide horticultural therapy and environmental education free of charge to adults with disabilities and developmental delay, children in shelters, hospice, foster homes, school groups, and more.



*Stephen Tybor (Nominated by ABC-WTVA, WLOV, & WKDH, Tupelo, MS)*

Stephen Tybor is one of the co-founders of Eight Days of Hope, a Disaster Recovery organization that seeks to help under and uninsured disaster victims rebuild their homes. Founded in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the organization has served communities in six states, responsible for rebuilding 1,482 homes and completing over \$18.2 million of work. They have had over 13,000 volunteers and over 452,000 volunteer hours to date, and an advisory board of 35 that spans across the country. Many are Mississippi natives, with representatives also reaching as far as New York and California.

On top of his work with Eight Days of Hope Steve has taken action in a new way. On December 23, two days before Christmas, in responding to a bank robbery two Tupelo police officers were shot at close range – one was critically injured and one killed. Tupelo had lost its first police officer in the line of duty but more importantly a family had lost a husband, a father, a son and a brother. An eight-year member of the police department and a U.S. veteran having served in Iraq, Gale Stauffer was 38 when he gave his life protecting the Tupelo community, and left behind his wife, Beth and their two children, Dixie and Skip.

Knowing how important it was to Beth Stauffer that her children grow up in the house they had once shared with Gale, Steve responded by starting an organization called Build for Beth. The Build for Beth campaign plans to remodel and refurbish Beth's home while also building an addition to the house. He is making this a reality by accepting monetary donations and building supplies. Funds remaining at the end of the project will be directed to a trust fund established for the Stauffer family.

**Gold Award – Students In Action**

*Presented to a school whose exemplary program of student volunteerism has successfully instilled the values of service, leadership and ethics.*

*Washington Township High School, Washington, NJ*

Washington Township has a long history of community service, and its Students In Action (SIA) Leadership Team represents 2,600 students, teachers, and community. Planting new seeds of service while working to expand and innovate existing initiatives, their SIA team generated over 82,000

service hours and raised over \$270,000 to support local charities, including \$48,000 for local families fighting life-threatening illnesses and \$30,000 for ALS research during Monzo Madness, an all-night dance-a-thon. They planned a township-wide week of service and recognized outstanding community members at their first ever Celebration of Service Gala. TWP (Together With Pride) SIA builds bridges between diverse students while encouraging a lifelong commitment to service.

### **Champions**

*The Jefferson Awards have 23 Champions – corporations, colleges and universities, local governments and non-profits – that utilize the Jefferson Awards to honor outstanding employees for their volunteer service. Current Champions represent collectively have more than one million employees. Each Champion has an internal selection committee that seeks nominations, and selects up to 12 recipients per year. The selected employees are presented with a Jefferson Award in recognition of their service.*

### ***Janie Lopez, Highmark***

As founder, president, and CEO of Youth Engaging in Leadership and Learning – YELL – Janie has touched the lives of more than 4,000 youth, business professionals and senior citizens in San Antonio, Texas, since the program's start in March 2009. In 2014, she has been working on the Sixth Annual San Antonio Youth Summit, where adolescents and teens will learn what it takes to be workforce-ready and, ultimately, successful. Janie is also a partner in Reach Out Actively Recruit – ROAR – an organization of business people who assist individuals looking for career opportunities. Janie delivers “Meals on Wheels,” is a den leader for her son's troop, and has been active in diabetes education and prevention.

### ***Lisa Bardill Moscaritolo, Pace University***

Lisa Bardill Moscaritolo, is the Dean of Students for Pace University on the Pleasantville Campus. Recognizing the impact that service has on student learning and the community, Lisa was the driving force behind the creation of Pace Makes a Difference Day, a program where students, faculty and staff spend a day volunteering. This program has grown to involve over 350 students yearly. Lisa also founded the Setters Leadership and Service House (SLH). SLH students are required to volunteer one to two hours a week, participate in workshops, and take a one-credit class. Prior to

her work at Pace, Lisa organized her Florida church group to provide food and supplies to those with HIV, served as a Red Cross volunteer and organized students to volunteer in soup kitchens.

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### *About the Jefferson Award Foundation*

#### **BUILDING A CULTURE OF SERVICE**

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#### **SCHOOLS, COMMUNITIES, WORKPLACES**

The Jefferson Awards Foundation is committed to tapping into the incredible capacity and spirit of young people. Through our Students In Action, Lead360 Challenge, and GlobeChangers programs we support, train and empower today's youth to be leaders, problem solvers, entrepreneurs and impactful global citizens. We identify and celebrate local unsung heroes who serve in communities across the country through our vast network of media partners, and we have partnered with 23 prestigious corporate and university Champions to build a culture of service in workplaces and on campuses.