



21st Heinz Awards Honor Pediatrician Nadine Burke Harris for Pioneering Protocols to Identify and Treat Toxic Stress in Children

Dr. Nadine Burke Harris is transforming pediatric care by addressing a significant yet often unrecognized risk factor for chronic disease later in life

PITTSBURGH, September 14, 2016—The Heinz Family Foundation today named pediatrician and founder and CEO of the Center for Youth Wellness, Nadine Burke Harris, M.D., the recipient of the prestigious 21st Heinz Award in the Human Condition category. Dr. Burke Harris is honored for her work in establishing protocols to identify and treat children suffering from toxic stress caused by extreme poverty, neglect, unsafe or chaotic surroundings, abuse or mental illness on the part of parents and family.

As part of the accolade, Dr. Burke Harris will receive an unrestricted cash award of \$250,000.

Dr. Burke Harris explains that children who experience or witness violence or who are in environments that are neglectful or unsafe experience high levels of stress and fear, which can kick in as early as infancy. The trauma triggers the release of stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol. This in turn creates chemical reactions in the body and brain, even affecting the immune and hormone systems. When stressful situations happen repeatedly and intensely, children's bodies become overtaxed at a time when their brains, nervous systems and organs are still developing, causing long-term damage to the neurological, immune and hormonal systems.

Research has linked Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to a significantly increased risk of chronic disease later in life, including diabetes, asthma, kidney and heart disease, obesity and cancer in addition to substance abuse, depression and suicide. In children, early symptoms of toxic stress are often misdiagnosed as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Dr. Burke Harris was the founding physician of the Bayview Child Health Center (BCHC), established in San Francisco in 2007. After identifying ACEs and toxic stress as a major health threat to her patients, Dr. Burke Harris created the Center for Youth Wellness (CYW) in 2011 with a mission to prevent, screen and heal the impacts of ACEs and toxic stress. Together the two organizations are dedicated to offering pediatric care in conjunction with behavioral and mental health services essential to mitigating the damaging consequences of ACEs. Through the development of a lifesaving screening tool to identify ACEs in young patients, Dr. Burke Harris is revolutionizing the way pediatricians will diagnose and treat infants and children suffering from toxic stress. Screening helps parents and caregivers identify and understand how early adversity may be affecting their child's health, well-being and learning. The results then guide physicians in implementing the appropriate interventions, which include mental health services, mindfulness and coping skills, nurse home visits, education and support for improving lifestyle choices. Dr. Burke Harris is sharing her screening method with colleagues around the world, and to date the tools developed have been downloaded by nearly 1,000 clinicians from 15 countries, along with a set of recommendations for evidence-based interventions for parents and patients.

Research Dr. Burke Harris conducted at the BCHC in partnership with Stanford University revealed that when children are exposed to four or more ACEs, they are twice as likely to be overweight or obese, and

32 times as likely to have learning or behavior problems as compared to children of the same income and ethnicity with zero ACEs.

“Through her valuable and enlightening work, Dr. Nadine Burke Harris stands out as a powerful advocate for disadvantaged populations in our nation’s communities,” said Teresa Heinz, chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “She has developed a multidisciplinary intervention to mitigate the long-term impact of traumatic experiences in childhood, including the effects of poverty. She raises awareness of the enormity of these experiences and their implications for the health of our most vulnerable and focuses national attention on the lifelong consequences of toxic stress on children. Her work has the potential to improve the health and lives of future generations.”

The intervention developed by Dr. Burke Harris and her colleagues takes a two-generation approach, addressing the needs of parents and other caregivers, who are often suffering from toxic stress themselves and need help in recognizing and addressing it so they can better support and care for their children. As she continues serving children and families in her local community, Dr. Burke Harris is committed to raising awareness and educating other physicians on screening for and responding to the effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress. Dr. Burke Harris works closely with the American Academy of Pediatrics—serving on the Project Advisory Committee for the organization’s Resilience Project—which notably held its first national conference on toxic stress in 2015.

In 2014, Google.org awarded a \$3 million grant to CYW to further develop and study its clinical protocol to address toxic stress, a critical next step for further investigation and dissemination with parents, practitioners and policymakers. In 2015, the Tara Health Foundation awarded CYW \$4.8 million to create the Bay Area Research Consortium on Toxic Stress and Health in partnership with University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), and UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland.

“The data shows us that without intervention, early adversity dramatically increases the risk of lifelong health problems and even early death,” Dr. Burke Harris said. “Many people see that as a huge challenge, but I see it as a huge opportunity. The medical community has not developed robust responses to ACEs, but we have an opportunity to intervene and interrupt the progression of early adversity to disease and early death. Our goal is to transform primary care pediatrics in a way that recognizes and addresses these risk factors. I go into this work with the belief that nothing is impossible, and that’s what keeps me going every day.”

Established to honor the memory of U.S. Senator John Heinz, the 21st Heinz Awards this year recognize 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. Now in its 21st year, the Heinz Awards has recognized 128 individuals and awarded more than \$25 million to the honorees. For more information about the awardees visit <http://heinzawards.net/2016>.

In addition to Dr. Burke Harris, the 21st Heinz Awards honored the following individuals:

- **Arts and Humanities: Troy “Trombone Shorty” Andrews, New Orleans, La.** Mr. Andrews, a celebrated multi-instrumentalist and performer, is being recognized for his achievements as a musician and for his community work to preserve and pass on to younger generations the rich musical heritage of his native New Orleans.

- **Environment: Hal Harvey, San Francisco, Calif.**
Mr. Harvey, one of the leading strategists in the nonprofit sector's efforts to reduce the impacts of climate change, is being recognized for his results-driven solutions in energy policy and innovation to dramatically reduce carbon emissions and energy waste worldwide.
- **Public Policy: Michelle Alexander, Columbus, Ohio**
Ms. Alexander, a legal scholar, advocate, civil rights attorney and author, is being recognized for her work in drawing national attention and constructive action to the issue of mass incarceration of African American youth and men in the United States.
- **Technology, the Economy and Employment: Matt Mullenweg, Houston, Texas**
Mr. Mullenweg, visionary co-founder of WordPress, is being recognized for creating a free, simple-to-use, open-source website and blogging platform that is helping to democratize online publishing.

Winners will receive their awards in Pittsburgh on October 4, 2016.

EDITORS/REPORTERS: To obtain photos of Dr. Burke Harris 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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