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The Magazine of The Heinz Endowments

## COMMUNITY MAKEOVER

Philanthropic investment in a former steel mill site offers promise of a vibrant future



# inside

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The Heinz Endowments was formed from the Howard Heinz Endowment, established in 1941, and the Vira I. Heinz Endowment, established in 1986. It is the product of a deep family commitment to community and the common good that began with H.J. Heinz, and that continues to this day.

The Endowments is based in Pittsburgh, where we use our region as a laboratory for the development of solutions to challenges that are national in scope. Although the majority of our giving is concentrated within southwestern Pennsylvania, we work wherever necessary, including statewide and nationally, to fulfill our mission.

That mission is to help our region thrive as a whole community — economically, ecologically, educationally and culturally — while advancing the

state of knowledge and practice in the fields in which we work. Our fields of emphasis include philanthropy in general and the disciplines represented by our five grant-making programs: Arts & Culture; Children, Youth & Families; Education; Environment; and Innovation Economy.

In life, Howard Heinz and Vira I. Heinz set high expectations for their philanthropy. Today, the Endowments is committed to doing the same. Our charge is to be diligent, thoughtful and creative in continually working to set new standards of philanthropic excellence. Recognizing that none of our work would be possible without a sound financial base, we also are committed to preserving and enhancing the Endowments' assets through prudent investment management.

**h magazine** is a publication of The Heinz Endowments. At the Endowments, we are committed to promoting learning in philanthropy and in the specific fields represented by our grant-making programs. As an expression of that commitment, this publication is intended to share information about significant lessons and insights we are deriving from our work.

**Editorial Team** Linda Bannon, Linda Braund, Donna Evans, Carmen Lee, Douglas Root, Robert Vagt. Design: Landesberg Design

**About the cover** The upbeat attitude that funders are encouraging in Hazelwood through neighborhood investment is reflected in the confident moves of Jamal Williams and LeBraya Latimer. Both are dancers with K.R.U.N.K. Movement, a Hazelwood-based program that teaches performance and business skills to youth. K.R.U.N.K. was part of a community celebration for the opening of the Hazelwood section of the Heritage Bike Trail earlier this year. Photo by Martha Rial

# 1h

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Hosanna House in Wilkinsburg is more than a community center or social services hub. It's a caring place that is attracting clients by the hundreds and respect from local foundations.

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A Hazelwood steel mill has been closed for nearly two decades, but plans are under way to pump new life into the site and new hope into the neighborhood.



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Although journalism has been dramatically transformed by online media, Pittsburgh foundations are doing what they can to ensure that in-depth, local news coverage doesn't disappear.

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# feedback

Our last issue of *h* provided an in-depth look at the Breathe Project air quality initiative, which the Endowments launched a year ago, and highlighted the 50th anniversary of “Silent Spring,” the landmark book by the late conservationist and western Pennsylvania native Rachel Carson. The magazine also profiled the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and its role in reshaping Pittsburgh over the decades.



## Community Affairs

Successful economic development requires that you offer a good place to live as well as a competitive place to work. Christine O'Toole's story “Community Affairs” shows how the Allegheny Conference on Community Development has contributed to that goal. It was the creative force in the establishment of the Allegheny Regional Asset District in 1993, which is dedicated to sustaining and improving the quality of life in our region.

Playing its historic role of bringing private and public sectors to the table, the Allegheny Conference raised the funds and educated the public and elected officials on the benefits of a dedicated revenue stream to make sure that our libraries, regional parks, and cultural and civic facilities remained the fabric of our community. As executive director of the Regional Asset District, I appreciate that the conference's success has resulted in \$1.3 billion in investment in those assets as well as a like amount in funds to county and municipal governments to lower the dependence on property tax. RAD was a win-win for our area, and the conference's dedication to the concept is the main reason it exists at all.

One important clarification: While the conference budget has grown over the years, the figure quoted in Chris O'Toole's sidebar article, “Other City Leadership Groups Share Pittsburgh's Goals,” is the consolidated budget of several important economic development and research agencies brought under the conference umbrella. This shared service arrangement is efficient and a model for other regional organizations.

David L. Donahoe  
Executive Director  
Allegheny Regional Asset District

## Green Legacy

Thank you for the “Green Legacy” article by Natalie Bell, which I enjoyed reading. As manager of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, I've noticed that a positive

outcome from the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Carson's book “Silent Spring” has been the outpouring of articles, reflections, remembrances and calls to action. Tellingly, events are advertised on Facebook, reflections and remembrances are blogged, texting connects activists, and YouTube is swimming with video interpretations. Just as communication changed with the advent of popular television, which accompanied the “Silent Spring” era, mobile browsing, web chatting, targeted advertising, customized reading and personalized music now feed omnipresent handheld devices.

Carson's writing success stemmed from her accessibility. Bell cites Carson's fresh subject, public science and her allegorical style. Bell also documents some of the reduced pesticide success stemming from the messages in “Silent Spring.” Others have noted the almost universal good from her message on the interconnectivity of all living things and their link to the earth. When Carson wrote, the subject matter was familiar, if unexplored, and the message well-crafted. The book rose on the national stage, in part due to the swelling tide of mass communication and an unprecedented connectedness to the world around us. Defenders and condemners made their case to a large-scale audience. In 1962, television was just becoming an omnipresent influence; today, a digital platform is the popular choice for news and entertainment for Americans. If computers were responsible for shrinking our world, then mobile technology takes the next step and connects us constantly, erasing geographic boundaries.

Texting surpassed phone communication five years ago. The shorthand style found in texts is the subject of derision, but the same arguments were probably made when contemporary style replaced traditional writing. Effective writing is transparent. It strives to convey meaning to an intended public, a goal that the texting upheaval meets, just as Carson's idiomatic style spoke to the 1960s

audience. Absent, however, is a Caronesque communicator. Perhaps at Carson's alma mater, Chatham University, informed awareness can influence another student to write about today's pending environmental crises with the world as her audience.

Ward Feurt  
Manager  
Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge  
Wells, Maine

## Air Time

I read with interest Jeff Fraser's article “Air Time,” on efforts to improve Pittsburgh's air quality through the Breathe Project initiative. Leaders in the regional community impressed me when we compared their efforts with those to clean Houston's air, without sacrificing economic growth, during the six years I served as Houston's mayor. Pittsburgh, like Houston, is proud of its industrial past and also has had to overcome stereotypes about its air quality. Leaders in the business community, nonprofits and the public sector worked together to achieve measurable improvements in air quality, based on good science.

Pittsburgh has so much to offer: hard-working people, mountains, fall foliage, and a sense of community built on history and traditions. In the long run, its economic development, like Houston's, depends on the willingness of entrepreneurs, executives and skilled workers to move there. Most Americans want their loved ones to breathe clean air. I have been in the energy business, and I know that responsible companies can meet air quality standards using best practices. Hats off to civic leaders who understand that, in modern America, most jobs will move to where a skilled workforce wants to live, and not vice versa!

Bill White  
Former Houston Mayor  
Owner, White Interests LLC  
Houston, Texas





By Teresa Heinz  
Chairman, The Heinz Endowments

**I**magine that it has fallen to you to lead a large foundation serving the Pittsburgh region, and the first thing that lands on your desk is a thick, decade-old, file dealing with the purchase of an old brownfield site—one of the last remaining prime development tracts in the city.

As you sift through the history, you quickly understand that this is not just any old former industrial property. It is 178 acres of beautiful riverfront land. You note that, in buying it, your foundation and three others dreamed of inspired development guided as much by philanthropic principles as by the market.

The investment has demanded more patience than many expected. Through the years, grand plans and development schemes have been upended by the worst recession since the Great Depression, a disruptive highway project and a time-consuming site preparation process.

After all the delays, it seems that even the land itself is frustrated—its

vacant stretches calling out for rebirth, for sustenance and, in the name of the longtime residents in the neighborhoods around it, calling for growth to a new identity.

Now imagine another folder dropped on your desk. Stuffed into it are all the grants your foundation and others have made through the years to assist Hazelwood, the struggling community that hugs a stretch of the same brownfield now owned by the foundations. In another era, when the Jones & Laughlin Steel Co. was in business, the residents thrived.

Today, after all the planning meetings and the piecemeal outside efforts, Hazelwood is still weighed down by long-standing problems such as unemployment and violent crime rates much higher than the city average. There have been significant cuts in public transportation and basic services such as a grocery store.

In philanthropy generally, but especially in the work of our foundation, which focuses primarily on southwestern Pennsylvania communities, improving conditions that lead residents to a more positive sense of the places in which they live and work is everything.

In this issue, both of these imaginary grant-making scenarios are made real in “After the Mill,” our cover report on the intertwining of the land development project known as Almono (an acronym for Pittsburgh’s three rivers) with an ambitious place-based initiative now under way by the Endowments in Hazelwood.

The story demonstrates that the power of place-based philanthropy is in the conviction that there are no bad places, only bad conditions. Conditions can be changed, but places are the bedrock of our identity.

Miriam Therese MacGillis, a Dominican nun and co-founder of Genesis Farm, a literacy center in northwestern New Jersey, writes that Americans’ “failure to understand and revere place has unleashed a toxic assault on the conditions and communities of life that are the very umbilical cord to our own human existence.”

My late father-in-law, Jack Heinz, may not have had the same theological underpinning but he did have the same reverence for place when he saw past seedy blocks of 1980s Downtown Pittsburgh to envision a vibrant cultural district. Just a few years later, my late husband, John Heinz, led the Greater Pittsburgh Revitalization

Initiative, which extended the place-based philanthropic model to two sections of southwestern

Pennsylvania hardest hit by the collapse of the steel industry.

Each place-based experience informs the next, but there is much about the Hazelwood partnership that is unique for the Endowments. All five program areas—Arts & Culture; Children, Youth & Families; Community & Economic Development; Education; and Environment—along with the Communications section, are working as one team on the grant making. Before the first round of funding in October, there was a strong showing from residents in several community events and from stakeholders in a series of planning meetings.

The other two stories in this issue also validate the Endowments’ level of commitment to place: a report on several projects to enhance residents’ engagement in their communities by improving news and information gathering; and a story on Hosanna House, a remarkable human services provider and community convening center that has been a successful place-based anchor for two generations of Wilkinsburg residents.

Each of these stories confirms what foundation leaders here have recognized for many years—that connecting to a place is a hard-fought process and it carries a powerful force. The brilliant novelist and essayist Joan Didion tells us that a place “... belongs forever to whoever claims it hardest, remembers it most obsessively, wrenches it from itself, shapes it, renders it, loves it so radically that he remakes it in his own image.”

As often as possible, it should be the goal of philanthropy to enable that process and celebrate the result. *h*

## Commitment to place



Endearing faces of children such as Shawn Sanders, 3, foreground; Arnyah Bryant, 3, rear right; and Eliana Horne, 3, rear, help fuel Hosanna House's efforts to address a range of community needs in Wilkinsburg.

# open house

WHEN HOSANNA HOUSE IN WILKINSBURG OPENS ITS DOORS, IT ALSO OPENS ITS HEART TO THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AND STRIVES TO MAKE EVERYONE FEEL AT HOME. BY ELWIN GREEN

Ten years ago, Jerome Drake, then 13, was a devout fan of “Robot Wars,” the television series imported from the BBC that featured homemade mechanical gladiators going head-to-head in noisy combat. The show was just part of an incursion into popular culture by robotics, which had children across the country building robots, picking up lessons in engineering and programming along the way.

But Drake grew up in Wilkinsburg, a once prosperous suburb east of Pittsburgh that had devolved into a community struggling with double-digit population decline, more than a fifth of the residents living below the poverty line, and a violent crime rate higher than those for the state and nation. He was unlikely to experience robots—until Hosanna House, a nonprofit community organization, began offering a robotics program at Wilkinsburg Middle School.

Drake enrolled in the program, and when it was done, he signed up to learn more about robots at Hosanna House’s summer camp, which is conducted at its Sherwood Event Center, a 14-acre former country club that is a stone’s throw from the local highway. Within two years, he was an assistant in the robotics class.

Along the way, Drake became part of Hosanna House’s robotics team, which in 2004 went up against groups from across the Pittsburgh area in a competition called “May Madness.” They brought back an award for the “Most Ingenious Solution” to a robotics challenge. Today, the student has become the teacher: The 23-year-old works in Hosanna

House’s youth center, teaching robotics to kids in grades seven through 12.

Drake’s students are just a small slice of the more than 40,000 people served annually by Hosanna House programs or agencies operating at its facility. Some come to learn. Some come for recreation. Some come to receive help in job hunting. Some come in search of housing or child care. Hosanna House meets all of these needs and more by offering encouragement and support along with services.

It’s this combination of personal touch and community credibility that elevates the organization’s work above many typical social service outreach efforts and has attracted support from The Heinz Endowments, an early partner that has provided \$2.4 million since 1991.

The past two decades have included some tough times, says Marge Petruska, senior director of the Endowments’ Children, Youth & Families Program, but Hosanna House has continued to deliver what the community needs. “Because of their respect in the community and the work they do, we come back to support them,” Petruska explains.





Jerome Drake, far right, gives back to his community by working as a robotics instructor at Hosanna House, where he learned about robotics as a youth. Among the students he teaches in an after-school program are, from left to right, Isaiah Clark, 12; Jayla Snyder, 11; Eli Hicks, 11; Qiydar Muqtadir, 11; Jania Fluit, 12; Emoneah Lee, 12; Breona Pippens, 11; and Rosslin Watson, 13.

Hosanna House Executive Director Leon Haynes III shows his paper heart to youngsters in the organization's child care program. He and other staff reveal their sincerity of heart through their dedication to providing needed services in Wilkinsburg.

Hosanna House, which celebrated its 20th anniversary last year, was formed in response to a University of Pittsburgh study that recommended the creation of a “one-stop shop” for social services in Wilkinsburg. Bishop Joseph Garlington, pastor of the nondenominational Covenant Church of Pittsburgh, was one of the leaders of the initiative to create Hosanna House and still heads the organization's board. His church once had its main sanctuary on the edge of Wilkinsburg's business district before constructing a larger worship center about two miles away.

As a member of Covenant, Leon E. Haynes III became a volunteer with Hosanna House before the organization moved to its present home, a former middle school. When the opportunity arose to become its first executive director, he stepped forward: “I got sick and tired of being sick and tired of all the societal ills that affect poor folk, young folk and urban communities . . . I wanted to be a change agent and to make a difference, and I felt like it was a calling.”

The first priority for the organization was not to create any particular programs, says Haynes, but to find out what programs the community wanted and needed. Hosanna House took the common approach of hosting community meetings to hear from residents, yet went to uncommon lengths with it.

“We spent three years of town hall meetings, block parties and surveys to make sure we were doing what the community said it wanted,” explains Haynes.

That depth of input from the community helped to create a sense of ownership among residents that was demonstrated when Hosanna House eventually acquired the Horner Middle School building on Wallace Avenue in 1993. The building had been vacant for years, and when the call was put out for volunteers to spend a day working to help transform the place into an attractive community center, some 500 people showed up.

“What made it possible were all the sectors inside the community and outside the community,” Haynes says. Government, schools, churches, businesses, foundations, “all sectors came together and rallied.” People kept showing up by the hundreds during the 11 years that it took to completely rehab the four-story, 125,000-square-foot building.

Hosanna House continues to serve as the one-stop community site for services that residents called for during its three-year startup period. These include early childhood education, youth mentoring, job placement services for the disabled, and medical

and dental services. In June, the organization won a \$5,000 prize from Maxwell House in the company's “Drops of Good” competition, created to fund high-impact renovation projects by organizations with 501(c)(3) status. The money will go toward the remodeling of an empty room in the Hosanna House building into YUMS Cafe, a coffeehouse that also will serve as a business incubator for local youth.

Besides having a menu of its own programs, Hosanna House provides space for other agencies, ranging from NeighborWorks Western Pennsylvania, which promotes homeownership, to Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School, to the Wilkinsburg Family Support Center, which provides mental health counseling and substance abuse prevention.

Paulette Davis, director of the Wilkinsburg Family Support Center, notes that being a tenant in Hosanna House offers advantages over having a standalone location because it fosters collaboration—some of which may be unplanned. If a Family Support Center client has an emergency need for baby formula, “I walk them around the corner to WIC [Women, Infants and Children],” and that organization may be able to meet the need. Or conversely, one of the other agencies may call Davis: “They say, ‘Can we send somebody to you for diapers?’ and we say, ‘Yep.’”

When Dreda Cutler and her husband began looking for day care services after having their first child, Aundre, eight years ago, they hadn't considered Hosanna House. “We would ride past there every day and didn't know what it was,” she says. Then one day they decided to visit. “It was just like a warm feeling when we walked in the door.”

Hosanna House has been like a home away from home for Aundre ever since he enrolled. He advanced through the day care and child development programs, and now his brother, Cooper, nearly 2, attends its child care, too. “Hosanna House has been wonderful to us,” says Cutler. “It's like a small, close-knit community.”

The Hosanna House story has not been one of uninterrupted ascent, however. Like many nonprofit agencies, it has been tested by a variety of financial difficulties over the years, including a period of poor accounting practices. As a result, even before the recession hit, Hosanna House's revenues fell from almost \$5 million in 2000 to \$2.5 million in 2006, which forced the organization to make adjustments, including layoffs. Staffing dropped from 86 employees in the mid-2000s to the current 46, and about 20 percent of the organization's programs were cut.



“We focused  
on programs that we were  
very good at doing.” **Leon Haynes III**, executive director of Hosanna House

“We focused on programs that we were very good at doing,” with the quality of service being affirmed by outside evaluations, Haynes notes.

At the same time, the needs in the community continued unabated, even increasing in some cases. Hosanna House responded by leasing space to other providers such as Susquehanna Rehabilitation Services, which took over workforce development programming, and East Liberty Family Health Center, which now operates the dental center in the Hosanna House building.

“[Clients] didn’t leave Hosanna House because they were tapping into as many other services as they could,” Haynes explains. “That’s why we were the right partner [for other agencies]—we had the people there who could use the services.”

These changes also made a positive impression on funders, says Petraska of the Endowments, which, along with the McCune and Richard King Mellon foundations, provided transition funding from 2007 through 2010 as Hosanna House developed a new service model.

“You really saw the board and Leon take control of a financial crisis,” she adds. “They had to do dramatic restructuring... It was really hard work.”

Henry Beukema, executive director of the McCune Foundation, which has granted more than \$6 million to Hosanna House since the organization began, credits the board and staff members who stuck with the nonprofit through the difficult times with providing organizational stability and character.

“If you were putting together a list of organizations that learn from experiences, good and bad,” he says, “Hosanna House would clearly be on that list, and probably near the top.”



# “Hosanna House has been wonderful to us.”



Photos: Elizabeth Vincent Photography





# It's like a small, close-knit community.”

**Dreda Cutler**, parent of sons attending Hosanna House child care

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Among the evidence that the organization learned how to turn trials into triumphs is the increase in individuals seeking services at the center — whether provided by Hosanna House or another agency. The numbers rose from 25,314 in 2001 to 40,400 last year. From 2005 to 2011, the percentage of the organization's revenue from lease contracts grew from 16 percent to 44 percent.

Hosanna House's restructuring to address financial challenges served as a precursor to its current efforts to expand its portfolio by venturing into other areas, such as real estate development, which has been a response to individuals looking to the organization for leadership outside its main operations. It is partnering with the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation to restore the Crescent Apartments, now renamed Crescent Place, a 27-unit complex nestled in a Wilksburg cul-de-sac. The apartments are “supportive housing,” meaning that Hosanna House has contracted to provide social services for tenants.

A few blocks away sits Peebles Square, which includes six renovated row houses and a block of new single-family homes. For this project, Hosanna House partnered with ACTION Housing, a Pittsburgh-based nonprofit that provides affordable housing as well as educational and employment opportunities to low-income individuals. For buyers who qualify, the three-bedroom homes are being sold at a discounted price, with a forgivable second mortgage, which is a subsidy for low-income homebuyers.

Hosanna House also is making more effective use of its assets by, for instance, leasing space at the Sherwood Center and its main building. Already the Sherwood facility's pool and patio space attracts rental reservations a year in advance for weddings, picnics and other events. Haynes says that, this year, 8,000 to 10,000 people will visit the grounds for such occasions.

Plans call for refurbishing three of the five tennis courts at the Sherwood Center and converting the remaining two into deck hockey surfaces. A plateau north of the tennis courts is expected to be transformed into a combination football field and baseball

field, and a quarter-mile walking trail will be created in the woods at the edge of the property. Haynes hopes that in 2014 the organization will be able to construct a new building to match the clubhouse, expanding Sherwood's meeting space and allowing Hosanna House to generate more revenues.

At the main building, the organization is burnishing its reputation as a convener for important community events. Among those taking place this year in the 6,000-square-foot auditorium have been a conference to connect minority small business owners with government and nonprofit resources, and an Endowments-sponsored symposium on addressing racial inequity in society, which featured noted civil rights scholar John A. Powell.

“This allows people to use our space and leave something behind in terms of revenues,” Haynes says.

Still, Marissa Parks sees the essence of Hosanna House going beyond what can be measured on a bottom line. Parks, a Wilksburg High School alumna, was part of a Covenant Church youth group that helped clean the Hosanna House building before it opened two decades ago. Growing into adulthood, she became the single mother of three sons and took advantage of the child care that she helped to prepare a place for. “I knew the children were safe, and they were taken care of, and I didn't have to worry about that. I was able to focus on finishing school.”

More than child care services, Hosanna House offered encouragement.

“Mr. Leon was always telling me, ‘You can do this. I think you're going to be something,’” recalls Parks, who today is a sales support consultant with Prudential. “I really believe that was one of my big pushes . . . I'm in this great place now, and I honestly give some of the credit to Mr. Leon and to Hosanna House.”

Her sons — Rashad, 14; Marquise, 12; and Darnell, 10 — also continue to enjoy their Hosanna House connection, which includes swimming and learning to play tennis at the Sherwood Event Center.

These relationships are at the heart of Hosanna House, says Haynes. It is committed to the community and driven to help young people develop the character to compete, whether in robotics, swimming, tennis or life.

“When you come to Hosanna House, somebody's going to love on you. And for me, that's the solution. That changes behavior.” *h*

Acquired by Hosanna House in 2003, the 14-acre Sherwood Event Center property enables the organization to provide other groups such as Circle C Youth and Family Services with a facility that can accommodate outdoor recreational activities. Circle C's R U Connected Street Team, a peer-to-peer program for current and former foster children, had its pool party, called The Connection, at the Sherwood Center this year. Opposite page clockwise, Jahliyah Davis enjoys a game of volleyball while Maureasha Butler, below right, gets splashed in the pool. The event also included a session with Shaune Johnson, a recent Slippery Rock University graduate, who encouraged the younger students to strive to achieve their goals.

# ACT II: AFTER THE MILL

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS AND THREE OTHER LOCAL FOUNDATIONS PURCHASED A FORMER STEEL MILL NOW, WITH SEVERAL OBSTACLES GONE AND RENEWED VISION FOR TRANSFORMING

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*Jeff Fraser is a Pittsburgh-based freelance writer. His last story for h examined the development of the Breathe Project air quality initiative, which the Endowments launched last year.*





**SITE IN HAZELWOOD A DECADE AGO.  
THE PROPERTY AND NEIGHBORHOOD, REVITALIZATION IS BECOMING A REALITY. BY JEFFERY FRASER**

This shell of an industrial building represents the end of the Hazelwood community's steel mill past, but it also reflects the opportunity to create a new economic future.



For years, the Rev. Leslie Boone would look out a window in Hazelwood Presbyterian Church and watch a tumbleweed amble about Pittsburgh's last great brownfield in whatever direction the breeze decided to take it. She came to count on it being there, like a trusted companion. She even assigned it a gender. "Every time I looked," she says, "there would be nothing there but that tumbleweed. He'd just be rolling across that big empty space."

Such a sight would have been unthinkable decades earlier when the massive coke works that employed Boone's grandfather and some 5,000 other steelworkers during its peak years occupied the 178-acre site along the Monongahela River as a part of the region's steelmaking empire. Today, evidence of what for a century had been the economic engine of the city's Hazelwood neighborhood is all but gone. The mill pushed its last coke in 1997, and only a few industrial structures were spared from demolition, leaving plenty of unoccupied acreage—a state that has remained to this day, disappointing those who have held out hope that the site would attract development to help staunch the flight of neighbors and kindle much needed renewal.

"This isn't a place for tumbleweeds to roam," says Boone, pastor of the Hazelwood Presbyterian Church until last year. "It's not a desert. It's on the river, in a city. It's only five minutes from Downtown Pittsburgh."

The good news for Boone is that the days of allowing the riverfront brownfield to lie fallow appear to be drawing to a close. Ten years and one deep recession after buying the site, a group of four southwestern Pennsylvania foundations and its managing partner, the Regional Industrial Development Corp., are turning their vision of a mixed-use sustainable community knitted to the fabric of Hazelwood into reality.

Today, however, it is difficult for the casual observer to notice much change. For the most part, the brownfield appears to be just that—a mostly barren monument to what once was. But several important technical issues have been resolved at the site, named Almono after the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers that meet in Pittsburgh—not the least of which is the state of Pennsylvania having all but formally abandoned a decades-old plan to build a section of highway that was designed to slice through the brownfield. And a new, more refined vision for the site has been drawn that better reconciles the realities of the brownfield with the foundation partners' goals, which range

From the closed Hazelwood Presbyterian Church, right, to the view that residents have of the rubble-strewn Almono site, below right, Hazelwood does not appear to be a neighborhood on the mend. But local foundations are investing in organizations and their activists leaders such as the Rev. Leslie Boone, right, former pastor of Hazelwood Presbyterian, to plant seeds that are expected to yield social and economic fruit. One example is the Endowments' involvement in placing an option on the closed church property so that the community can decide how it should be used in the future.

from opening the riverfront to residents for the first time in more than a century to taking creative approaches to addressing environmental concerns, such as combined sewage overflow, which has long bedeviled the city and its neighborhoods.

Hazelwood also has been chosen as the first neighborhood in which The Heinz Endowments, one of the Almono foundation partners, will employ a "place-based" strategy of coordinating the resources of all five of its programs on a defined geographic area and working with residents to improve the quality of their lives as well as their neighborhood. The selection was due in no small part to a heightened awareness of the issues facing the neighborhood that was gained over the years from the Endowments' involvement in the riverfront brownfield development.

"For many residents and stakeholders, the site was what used to drive the neighborhood's economy. Now, it represents an opportunity for growth," says Rob Stephany, director of the Endowments Community & Economic Development Program and former executive director of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh. "The question is how the site will affect the neighborhood and when."

This fall, the Endowments awarded \$2.35 million in grants to Hazelwood projects as part of its place-based investment. The largest was \$1.35 million over three years to the community empowerment organization Center of Life to expand its youth and family programs. Among the others was \$25,000 to the Allegheny Council to Improve Our Neighborhood Housing for its work with the Endowments in putting an option on the Hazelwood Presbyterian Church property and beginning a process for the community to determine its best future use.

The closing of the church last year was evidence that neighborhood improvement can't come soon enough. A relatively small congregation for decades, Hazelwood Presbyterian had outreach programs that regularly attracted about 100 people, but Sunday attendance fluctuated anywhere from five to 40. The continued loss of churchgoers and weakened finances that contributed to the church property being put on the market mirror the challenges that confront the neighborhood. Hazelwood has experienced a steady exodus of residents. Its population, for instance, slid from 12,757 people in 1960 to 4,317 in 2010, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. And the incomes of nearly 24 percent of its residents fell below the federal poverty threshold in 2010.





Martha Rial

**“THIS ISN’T A PLACE FOR TUMBLEWEEDS TO ROAM. IT’S NOT A DESERT.  
IT’S ON THE RIVER, IN A CITY ... ONLY FIVE MINUTES  
FROM DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH.”**

**Rev. Leslie Boone**, former pastor of Hazelwood Presbyterian Church



Richard Kelly





Thomas & Katherine Detre Library and Archives, Sen. John Heinz History Center



Martha Rial

In the mid-20th century, Hazelwood's riverfront was bustling with coke production from the "Eliza" blast furnaces. By the 21st century, the furnaces had been shut down, and the community awaits an economic transformation.

**“WE GOT INTO THIS WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT THERE WAS AN ADVANTAGE TO HAVING PATIENT INVESTORS CONTROLLING THE LAST LARGE PIECE OF DEVELOPABLE RIVERFRONT PROPERTY IN THE CITY ... I DON’T THINK WE EVER DREAMED THAT PATIENCE WOULD MEAN MORE THAN 10 YEARS.”** William Getty, president of the Benedum Foundation

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Hazelwood’s prospects have been strongly tied to the Almono site since the mid-19th century, when the “Eliza” blast furnaces were built near the downriver boundary of the 1.5-mile-long strip of land on the north shore of the Monongahela. By 1906, Jones & Laughlin Steel Company was feeding the region’s mills with coke produced in Hazelwood from the largest concentration of beehive ovens found in the world. Production led to jobs and a steady rise in Hazelwood’s population, particularly immigrant workers of Hungarian, Italian, Slovak, Carpatho-Rusyn, Polish and Irish heritage. But as wages improved, workers gradually began leaving for the suburbs, and waning steel production in the 1980s quickened their flight. By the time the coke works’ last owner, LTV Corp., closed the plant, Hazelwood was a shadow of its former self.

LTV abandoned efforts to sell the shuttered mill to Sun Coke after the city refused to offer tax incentives for development—a decision influenced by the community’s concern over the noise and air pollution they expected from the new coke plant proposed by the Knoxville, Tenn.-based company. “Many in Hazelwood, but not all, felt it was time for something new—that, because of the high level of pollution from those plants and the growth of the high-tech industry, steel’s time had come and gone,” says Jim Richter, director of the Hazelwood Initiative, the neighborhood’s community development corporation for 13 years.

The Endowments and the Richard King Mellon, Claude Worthington Benedum and McCune foundations bought the site as Almono LP in 2002 for \$10 million. The philanthropies were convinced that “patient money” and the site’s proximity to the river, downtown and the city’s research-and-university hub in the nearby Oakland neighborhood offered a rare opportunity to set new standards for brownfield development.

The foundations drafted a set of principles to guide development in line with their aspirations for the built environment, and for the economic and social impact of the project. The principles, which have evolved over time, include finding ways to attract private-sector investment that creates quality jobs and generates tax revenue for the city. Such results could spur reinvestment in communities near the site and throughout the region, and tap into the evolving energy economy. Principles for the built environment include using best practices in sustainable site and building design, innovative reuse of existing buildings, and a forward-thinking transportation plan that will serve the

needs of those who will live and work on the Almono property and in the neighborhood well into the future. Goals also include drawing new people to the site and neighborhood, giving all residents access to the river, and collaborating with groups that stand to benefit from carefully conceived and executed development of the dormant former industrial location.

“If our only goal had been to recoup our \$10 million investment, we could have cobbled together something that made us whole. But that is not what is driving this,” says Endowments’ President Robert Vagt.

It’s unlikely that private developers under pressure to show a return on their investment as quickly as possible would adopt such ambitious principles for a property with an expansive riverfront that’s within easy reach of the city’s centers of wealth. “We’ve been very consistent in resisting the one-off proposed uses of the property and wanting to develop it according to a plan,” says William Getty, president of the Benedum Foundation. “We got into this with the expectation that there was an advantage to having patient investors controlling the last large piece of developable riverfront property in the city, although I don’t think we ever dreamed that patience would mean more than 10 years.”

Circumstances beyond the control of the partnership, managing partner and designers presented considerable challenges to developing the site. One of the thorniest was the design of a northern section of the Mon-Fayette Expressway, which called for extending the 39-year-old highway project through the Almono site as part of a 10-mile spur that would complete the connection between the former industrial towns of the Monongahela River valley and the City of Pittsburgh.

The uncertainty surrounding the expressway project complicated the work of early Almono designers, requiring them to draft two versions of the site’s initial master plan—one without the highway knifing through it and one accommodating the expressway a number of ways, such as installing a series of 750-foot lids over the expressway that could be used for anything from parking lots to athletic fields while serving as a bridge to the Hazelwood neighborhood.

“The expressway took about 35 to 40 acres of the site away and was very destructive to its value and reuse possibilities,” says Donald Smith, president of RIDC, the Almono managing partner.

Although the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission had environmental clearances and a design for the Monroeville-to-Pittsburgh leg of the expressway in hand, it did not have the

money to build it. The project was suspended several years ago. Also, its escalating cost, which stands at an estimated \$4 billion, failure to secure a private–public funding pool, cash-strapped state and federal budgets, and other factors so greatly diminished the prospects of the highway project that it has been excluded from the latest Almono development plan.

An unforeseen complication was the recession that befell the region, nation and world in 2007, and the severity and depth of the economic downturn. The climate of tight money and aversion to risk that followed led to a reassessment of issues, ranging from the local housing market to the level of interest among private developers in supporting the goals for the site and the extent to which they could be expected to share in the cost of developing it.

The Almono partners concluded, for example, that, given the sluggish economy, the site would be more attractive to private developers with the necessary infrastructure already in place. The cost of installing water and sewage lines, roads and intersections, utility trunk lines, and other basic infrastructure is estimated at \$20 million to \$25 million. The foundations agreed to make an additional investment to help pay the costs. And Almono LP applied to the city, school district and Allegheny County for tax increment financing, a public financing method that would divert a portion of future taxes on the site to help cover a portion of the infrastructure costs.

“The idea is to remove some of the risk and the time required to develop the site,” says Smith. “Developers interested in bidding on the site will know that the core infrastructure is in and permitted and ready to tap into. It will shorten the development cycle.”

Contractors razed most of the buildings on site, accepting the salvaged scrap as payment. But they left behind tons of buried concrete and steel that served as the foundations of the furnaces, coke ovens, and bar, billet and cold-fishing mills that had stood on the property.

Dealing with that heavy infrastructure presented another challenge. The issue was resolved by covering the site with 800,000 cubic yards of free, excess fill from nearby development projects, including the South Side Works brownfield development across the Monongahela and the recently completed transit tunnel that runs beneath the Allegheny River from Pittsburgh’s Downtown to its North Shore. The strategy saved up to \$12 million, removed soil remediation from the to-do list, raised elevations anywhere from two to 10 feet, and lifted all of the low-lying tracts above the flood plain.

Among the lessons learned over the past decade was the depth of uncertainty involved in developing a former industrial site the size of Almono. “You have to realize there will be a lot of things you won’t know going in,” says Caren Glotfelty, senior director of the Endowments’ Environment Program. “Getting a clear picture of what you know, what you may not know and how much that might add to the expense of developing a site is challenging.”

Another is that “patient money needs to continue to be patient,” says Vagt. “And patient investors need to continue to listen.”

Listening, particularly to voices of Hazelwood residents, has emerged as a key part of the development process in recent years as well as the Endowments’ evolving effort to focus its experience, resources and expertise on neighborhood issues that residents help identify.

As development of the Almono site progressed, the foundations commissioned a new master plan due to changes in the economic climate and markets over time and the fact that the physical challenges of the property had become more clear.

Rothschild Doyno Collaborative, a Pittsburgh-based architecture and urban design firm, was hired in 2010 to develop a new master plan and chose to do so “from whole cloth” rather than build on the original, says one of the firm’s partners, Ken Doyno. Including Hazelwood residents was central to the approach.

“We decided to develop stakeholder groups and interact with them rather than keeping it in a close circle. We used an open process in which we developed a series of outreach efforts in the community to show what we were doing as we went along.”

Their efforts haven’t gone unnoticed, says Boone. Although she is no longer pastoring Hazelwood Presbyterian Church, she continues to work in the neighborhood on missions that range from job training to the Fishes and Loaves community food cooperative she helped start years earlier. “One of the things we appreciate is that there’s been a sensitivity to what the people in the community want to see and how the community wants to be involved instead of them just sending some students in to show us a mock-up and tell us this is the new Hazelwood.”

The latest master plan eliminates from consideration the Mon-Fayette Expressway spur that threatened to divide the site and acknowledges that the short-line railroad running between the industrial property and the rest of the neighborhood won’t





Development of the foundation-purchased Almono site has included input from residents and other stakeholders about community improvements. Attending this planning session are, from left to right, Chelle Buffone, consultant; Bill Smith of the Greenfield Organization; Ken Doyno of the Rothschild Doyno Collaborative; Rev. Leslie Boone, former pastor of Hazelwood Presbyterian Church; Kristina DiPietro of the Hazelwood Initiative; and Wanda Wilson of Oakland Planning and Development.

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**“THE ALMONO PARTNERS AND ROTHSCHILD DOYNO, THEY GET IT. THEY GET THAT IT’S IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY THE RIGHT WAY AND NOT RUN AHEAD OF THE COMMUNITY.”** **Rev. Tim Smith**, pastor of Keystone Church in Hazelwood and executive director of Center of Life

be acquired as part of development and will continue to operate. The original plan, for example, had proposed a marina on a parcel that is owned by the railroad, which the railroad did not intend to sell.

Four districts on the site are outlined in the latest master plan, including a central green; a place for riverfront offices; an “eco-tech park” that envisions the renovation of Mill 19, one of the largest plant buildings still standing; and a primary residential zone known as Hazelwood Flats. The plan pays attention to what Doyno calls “honoring the site’s assets,” such as restoring for reuse Mill 19, a pump house and a roundhouse left over from the site’s steelmaking days.

And it offers opportunities for incorporating, where the grimy coke works once stood, green space; sustainable processes; renewable energy production, such as best practices in storm-water management and wind harvesting; a riverfront park; and a river overlook that might host educational programs and events.

Most striking is the idea of River Road, the plan’s signature element, which today does not exist. River Road is seen as the central avenue through the property, the thread tying new tenants and the existing neighborhood together as one and the antidote to the short-line railroad standing as a barrier between them. Just as important, it would offer Hazelwood residents easy access to the river that the coke works had long denied them.

Who will occupy the site remains unclear, but interest among developers and prospective tenants is expected to pick up after ground is broken next year for the installation of road, water and other basic infrastructure. For a moment, it appeared that the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center would build a vaccine

production and development center on the site. But several factors led UPMC to abandon its plans last year, including the federal government’s refusal to guarantee that it would buy the vaccines produced at the center. The mill’s old roundhouse is today being used by Carnegie Mellon University for robotics testing, and the school’s future plans for it are being explored. The master plan accommodates several other possibilities, including light manufacturing and office complexes nestled in an eco-friendly environment that might appeal to Oakland’s two research universities just a few miles away, and the restoration of the former mill’s riverfront pump house as an entertainment destination for the greater region.

While the previous plan envisioned putting the project in the hands of a single master developer, the sluggish economy and uncertain financial markets led the Almono partners to embrace a more flexible approach to development. Although they haven’t ruled out the notion of having a master developer, the latest plan allows them to seek out best-in-class developers for the various components of the plan, whether it’s office, industrial or residential.

The partners’ approach to development has evolved in other ways as well. The notion that, to the extent possible, the site will be taxable property has been given greater emphasis, for example, to avoid diluting the benefits the city, school district and county stand to gain from the development at a time when they are struggling to make ends meet. And the foundation partners themselves have become more engaged in how the project evolves.

# BROWN (TO GREEN) FIELD

The Almono site in Pittsburgh's Hazelwood neighborhood offers a unique opportunity for the creation of an economically, socially and physically sustainable community. Plans call for transforming the 178 acres, which represent the last brownfield within Pittsburgh city limits, into four distinct districts, each with its own development focus. Yet, together, the different sections will provide a major revitalization boost to an area of the city that's been struggling for nearly 30 years.



RIVERVIEW

SMART SITE  
CENTRAL GREEN

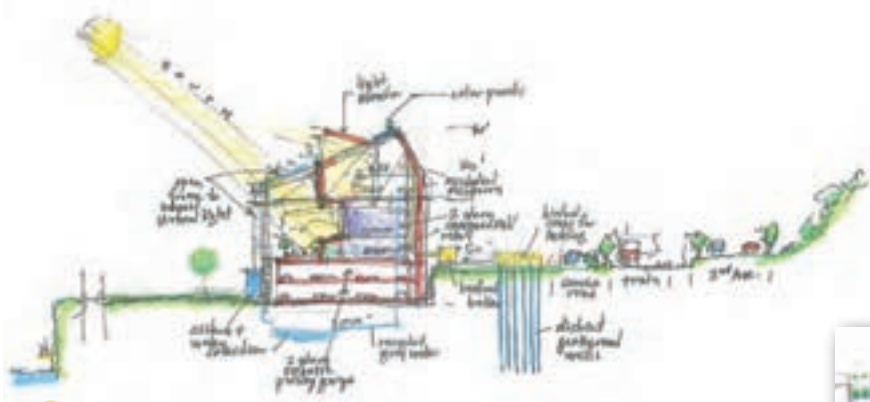


**A** The focus of this Almono district will be to maximize the property's riverfront by having high-tech office and biotech buildings face outward to the Monongahela River. The section will include landscape design that complements and connects with the hillsides and parks.

**B** Plans call for restoring a historic round-house and transforming the surrounding landscape into an active, civic destination adjacent to the Monongahela River. Bays that once housed trains would be opened up to create an indoor-outdoor facility such as a restaurant. Other possibilities for the structure include turning the existing turntable into a bridge with a fountain below and outdoor seating.



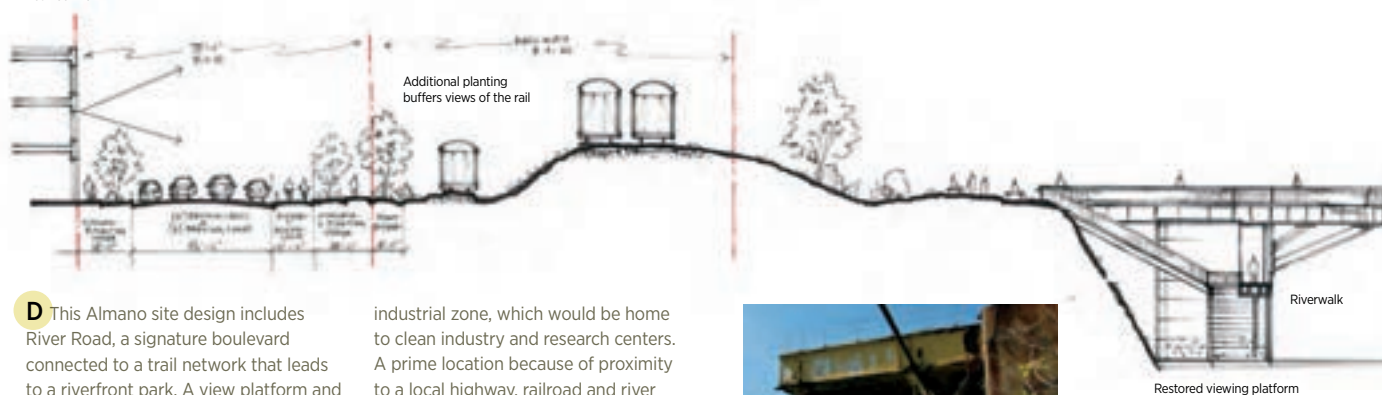




**E** New housing in this Almono district will serve as a residential addition to the Hazelwood neighborhood. It will be fully connected to the community and allow for development reinvestment to occur on-site and off-site concurrently.



Eco-Tech Park



**D** This Almono site design includes River Road, a signature boulevard connected to a trail network that leads to a riverfront park. A view platform and pump house in the park would be restored for new use. The Eco-Tech Park section would serve as the site's

industrial zone, which would be home to clean industry and research centers. A prime location because of proximity to a local highway, railroad and river barge traffic, it would have close access to technical talent at nearby universities.



Restored viewing platform

Development of the Almono site and the Endowments' place-based work will complement community efforts already under way in Hazelwood. The opening earlier this year of the neighborhood's section of the Heritage Bike Trail encouraged residents of all ages to ride along Hazelwood's riverfront. The Endowments awarded community empowerment organization Center of Life a three-year, \$1.35 million grant to expand its community development efforts, which include the organization's Fusion program. The initiative offers opportunities for children such as Mia Acosta, center, to be tutored by Jay Spinx and other adults while also providing for educational games, which Hannah, Lexee and Ashlee Edwards, right, enjoy.

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"The first experience wasn't wasted. We learned a lot. And there has been a continuous thread, which is, 'Let's develop this in a way that's positive,'" says Vagt. "But the first process forced us to look at things differently, which has given new definition to the vision of what responsible development by a group of foundations might look like."

Integrating that development more tightly with the existing neighborhood than has been done in other brownfield reuse projects in the region has emerged as a key objective. Design elements, such as constructing River Road as a central boulevard, may address the physical challenges of making the new development and the existing neighborhood whole, but the economic and social considerations also are part of the equation.

Such considerations are important across all aspects of development, but none more so than housing. "Nobody is well served through sorting by race and class," says Doyno. "The idea is for the project to serve the whole range of population. You don't do that by making an island of market-rate housing, but by having mixed-use housing that is interconnected so that everyone is served."

"There is an absolute stated goal for the community to welcome the changes. If residents feel that the changes will mean they're kicked out or they don't belong there any longer, they have every reason to object to what is happening."

For the better part of three decades, Hazelwood has struggled with the economic and social issues that have become all too common in the Monongahela River towns that had relied on the steel industry for their residents' livelihood. In addition to steep population losses and lingering high rates of unemployment and poverty, nearly 30 percent of residents never earned a high school diploma, and more than one of every five houses in the neighborhood stands vacant.

The Almono development is widely seen as offering the neighborhood its best chance in years to make significant progress toward turning its fortunes around. But the anticipated offices, manufacturing, new housing, tenants and jobs by themselves are no guarantee that Hazelwood will fully realize the development's potential benefits, says Richter. "There are those who feel that because it is in their neighborhood they should have first crack at the opportunities that come with it. But that can't happen without building the individual and community capacity to respond to the marketplace."



Recent years have seen the community move toward better positioning itself to tackle issues that have lingered for decades, such as housing conditions, job opportunities, the lack of a local school, access to health care, public transportation and places to shop for necessities as basic as food. "As a community, we have been growing, transitioning, coming together and mapping out what we'd like to see, and trying to engage and empower ourselves to put some of these things in action," says the Rev. Tim Smith, pastor of the Keystone Church in Hazelwood and executive director of Center of Life.

How and to what extent the development of the long-dormant brownfield along the river will contribute to the revitalization of Hazelwood remains unclear. But Smith's hopes for the future of the neighborhood have been buoyed by the turn the development process has recently taken. "The Almono partners and Rothschild Doyno, they get it. They get that it's important to engage the community the right way and not run ahead of the community. They've been very intentional in hearing the community, including the community and following the community's lead. There are a lot of Hazelwood voices in the Almono site design."

An intimate understanding of the deep-seated challenges the neighborhood faces in building capacity, gained from its decade-long involvement in Almono, contributed to the Endowments deciding to choose Hazelwood as the focus of a holistic, place-based strategy for making broad, lasting improvements in community wellness. The idea is to partner with the neighborhood and coordinate foundation programs and resources in education, child and family well-being, arts and culture, economic development, and environment in a comprehensive assault on stubborn social and economic problems that have undermined revitalization efforts in the past.

Pittsburgh's distinctive neighborhoods are well-suited for such a holistic approach, Vagt says. "The opportunities for addressing poverty are so well defined geographically that it begs for this kind of approach."





Center of Life



# HAZELWOOD RISING

The Endowments has awarded \$2.35 million in grants this year to projects in Hazelwood as part of its place-based initiative. The investment in the different efforts will help lay a foundation for additional neighborhood development in the future.

**Center of Life**  
**\$1,350,000**

The three-year grant will enable a significant increase in the size of three programs: the K.R.U.N.K. Movement music and arts initiative, the Fusion after-school program and organized community basketball. The expanded capacity is specifically aimed at getting more Hazelwood students into these programs.

**Allegheny County  
Department  
of Human Services**  
**\$250,000**

The two-year award will provide startup support to plan and develop a new family support center in Hazelwood that will provide a comprehensive set of family and human services in the neighborhood. After the planning and startup phase, the center will be supported by the Department of Human Services.

**Rebuilding Together  
Pittsburgh**  
**\$400,000**

In partnership with Center of Life and local contractors, the grant will enable existing homeowners in need of assistance with critical repairs to make improvements to their homes. The grant also will fund the acquisition and rehab of some vacant houses and provide new homeownership opportunities to those currently unable to access it.

**Appropriation for a  
faith-based grant program**  
**\$250,000**

This support is aimed at churches looking to improve their ability to provide needed services to their Hazelwood community.

**Miscellaneous interim  
grants made in  
the past six months**  
**\$150,000**

Among these grants is \$25,000 to Allegheny Council to Improve Our Neighborhoods-Housing Inc. to assist the organization in gaining site control and beginning pre-development activities on the former Hazelwood Presbyterian Church property.

Similar strategies have been employed with success to address intergenerational poverty on a neighborhood level in several cities, including San Diego and Detroit. Perhaps the most celebrated example is Atlanta's East Lake neighborhood, which for decades endured poverty, poor school performance among its children and a crime rate more than 18 times higher than the national average. Its transformation, begun in the mid-1990s, included a mixed-income housing strategy; school reform; an emphasis on early education; improved community services, such as health programs; and access to banks, libraries and grocery stores. As a result, crime has fallen 73 percent, including a 90 percent drop in violent crime; 99 percent of the neighborhood's fifth-graders meet state math standards compared with 5 percent before the transformation; and the average annual household income has risen from \$4,536 to \$15,830, according to Purpose Built Communities, a community revitalization nonprofit that grew from the East Lake successes.

Although the Endowments' place-based initiative is still young, more than 50 meetings had been held with neighborhood stakeholders before the beginning of summer to determine the best ways to enable Hazelwood to regain its footing while bulldozers and backhoes transform the blighted industrial acreage along its riverfront from an eyesore to a neighborhood and regional amenity.

An indication of a brighter future to come was a community celebration in July of the opening of the Hazelwood section of the Heritage Trail. A bike trail was not among the neighborhood needs that residents listed on blackboards set up at the outdoor event—a grocery store, better houses, more police and jobs were the most coveted—but the celebration, which brought out a local jazz band, food vendors, a climbing wall and other recreation, was welcomed by residents while the trail was described by organizers as one way to bring more people to Hazelwood to see its potential.

"We are of the opinion that a lot of good things can happen in Hazelwood," says the Endowments' Stephany, "well before keys get delivered to the first tenants on [the Almono] site." *h*



# JOURNALISM 2.0



Traditional news media's business models are crumbling against the forces of a digital communications revolution. The unsettling result: the loss of reliable sources of independently produced information—the lifeblood of our democracy. Now, foundations from Pittsburgh to the Pacific Coast are jumping in to preserve the quality of news reporting and its flow. by Christine H. O'Toole

**L**ast September, the spartan office of PublicSource—an online investigative journalism project perched on the second floor of Pittsburgh Filmmakers—suggested more of a 1920s-style “Front Page” newsroom than a high-tech media center. Electrical cords snaked across a windowless room furnished with a few scarred desks and one small conference table. Editor Sharon Walsh was still three reporter hires and eight months away from her first major deadline, an ambitious reporting package with five other media outlets. The oversized laser proofs on her desk showed not a newsprint layout, but designs for the keystone of her project: a website supporting “deep dive” storytelling and multimedia.

As the 22-story series on the social, psychological and economic challenges faced by returning western Pennsylvania war veterans debuted in April, Walsh reiterated the mission of her new nonprofit.

“Fortunately, Pittsburgh is a media-rich area: two daily papers, commercial radio, lots of different media platforms,” she explained. “There’s plenty of news. But is it in-depth? Is there enough digging?”

In a western Pennsylvania media landscape pounded by the seismic waves of digital technology, a crushing recession and fickle audiences, digging has become a luxury. Traditional media stalwarts from CNN and Newsweek magazine to Pittsburgh’s dailies and network affiliates have struggled to provide in-depth coverage as their profit margins tumble. The Federal Communications Commission, in a June 2012 report, called

the current situation “an unusual moment: Ignoring the ailments of local media will mean that serious harm may be done to our communities.”

The report stated that, in paper after paper, local accountability journalism is down according to several studies. As a sobering example, a 2010 report on a study of Baltimore news reporting by the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism concluded that, although newspapers in the area still provided the bulk of news content, coverage had diminished considerably.

“Significantly, with fewer reporters on the job,” the FCC report stated, “governmental institutions drove much of the coverage,” with official press releases often appearing word for word in first accounts of events.

The FCC report cites many other worrisome outcomes from news coverage retrenchment. “Many staff cutbacks have occurred on beats that had enormous civic impact but lacked sexy, marketable stories. As editors prune beats to leave only those that generate buzz—or, in the case of websites, traffic—they are tempted to serve fewer portions of ‘broccoli journalism,’ i.e., stories that might be unpopular but good for you.”

Despite the casualties inflicted on the principle of the People’s Right to Know, the FCC report takes a hopeful stance. “Paying attention to [the ailments] will enable Americans to develop, literally, the best media system the nation has ever had.” It is a call to action to which many foundations have responded vigorously.

In January 2010, two solutions to the contraction of local in-depth news reporting surfaced simultaneously in the southwestern Pennsylvania market, the nation’s 22nd largest. The



region's largest public radio station, a popular National Public Radio affiliate, was put on the block by its owner, Duquesne University.

Meanwhile, community leaders with media backgrounds began developing a business plan for an investigative-and-explanatory website that would become PublicSource. Their attempt to improve local news reporting came after a decade of journalistic losses. As traditional ad revenues declined, the red ink flooded newsrooms. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, the city's largest daily, saw its editorial staff shrink from a high of 273 reporters in 2000 to about 173, a proportion mirrored at newspapers across the country. The result: Resources for in-depth and investigative coverage contracted, too.

Yet, as Walsh and her foundation supporters recognize, the public appetite for news remains strong. In 2010, the Pew Research Center reported that the average time Americans spend with the news on a given day is as high as it was in the mid-1990s, when newspaper and network TV audiences were much larger. But a 2011 Pew Center report pinpoints the key difference from the old model: "In the 20th century, the news media thrived by being the intermediary others needed to reach customers. In the 21st, increasingly there is a new intermediary: Software programmers, content aggregators and device makers control access to the public," wrote authors Tom Rosenstiel and Amy Mitchell.

The resulting high-stakes challenge for local communities—even in media-rich cities such as Pittsburgh—is how to ensure impartial, robust reporting of important issues no matter the media business model.

"As resources dry up, I think there has to be a new way of thinking," says Charlie Humphrey, now executive director of the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts and Pittsburgh Filmmakers. A longtime player in the local news media scene—he was the publisher of a now-defunct alternative weekly, *InPittsburgh*, in the 1990s—Humphrey was involved in the 2010 discussions with foundations. "I think the community benefits by having important stories available on multiple platforms."

Increasingly, foundations are deciding that civic engagement on issues connected to their grant-making efforts is essential to success. "For the community to be able to solve a problem or take full advantage of an opportunity, information developed from trusted, independent news sources is everything," says Heinz Endowments President Robert Vagt. The Endowments, along



Joshua Franzos



401(K) 2012



**“WE WILL PROVE OURSELVES BY WHAT WE COVER AND HOW WE COVER IT. ESSENTIALLY ALL YOU HAVE IS INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE. IF THAT’S EVER IN DOUBT, YOU HAVE FAILED.”**

**Sharon Walsh**, PublicSource editor



PublicSource’s small but dedicated staff tackles big issues affecting western Pennsylvania. Above, clockwise from left, Web Development Director Alexandra Kanik, Editor Sharon Walsh and reporters Halle Stockton, Bill Heltzel and Emily DeMarco discuss aspects of the news website during a staff meeting. Investigative projects the team has produced include reports on Pennsylvanians whose money influences elections, below left, and the impact of gas drilling on communities such as Hopewell Township south of Pittsburgh, below center. PublicSource also participated in a joint “Coming Home” reporting project with other local media about the issues faced by veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. Among those featured from the Pittsburgh region was Air Force Reserve Maj. Brad Davis, a chaplain, pictured in Afghanistan comforting a soldier with a bullet wound to his neck.





Foundation support helped launch 90.5 WESA, which expanded the region's local and National Public Radio news offerings by investing in more in-depth coverage and collaborating with other media. WESA hosted a "Green Gatherings" discussion about the impact of environmental issues on the 2012 election that included Heather Sage, vice president of the environment protection group PennFuture, below foreground, and Chris Potter, editor of Pittsburgh City Paper, as panelists. On the opposite page, Paul Guggenheimer, above, devotes an edition of his Essential Pittsburgh news and talk show to the joint "Coming Home" reporting project with other media. Larkin Page-Jacobs, center, is the Pittsburgh host for the NPR afternoon news magazine All Things Considered. Below right, NPR staff in Washington, D.C., produce live election coverage on Nov. 6 that was aired in Pittsburgh on WESA.







90.5 WESA



with the John S. and James L. Knight, Pittsburgh and Mellon foundations, have together invested \$809,000 in the PublicSource website to help provide vital information.

“Look at the primary issues with which we’re engaged: public education, clean air and water, good government,” says Vagt. “They will only be addressed successfully when people’s knowledge grows. We are not funding agenda-driven or biased propaganda operations. We are funding in-depth, compelling journalism with the goal of community education.” Foundations across the country are recognizing the same need in the communities and causes they serve and are lending support to supplement, often with new media, what has been lost in traditional journalism. The platforms and purposes run to extremes—from the two-time Pulitzer Prize–winner ProPublica, a national investigative news outlet, to the YouTube-based weekly news series by Pittsburgh rapper Jasiri X.

Though vastly cheaper than print and broadcast, online and mobile news operations still have to pay for technology and talent.

“Nobody in the country is entirely sure what sustainability for nonprofit journalism will be,” says Grant Oliphant, president of The Pittsburgh Foundation, which galvanized philanthropic support for the public radio station purchase and PublicSource.

Despite that uncertainty, foundations have poured an estimated \$2 billion into nonprofit media experiments in the past decade alone. The runaway funding leader, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, has devoted \$100 million to projects nationwide in the past five years. Scripps, Hearst and Annenberg, all legacies of other media fortunes, have funded pilots and journalism education. The Sandler Foundation has underwritten ProPublica since its founding in 2007. The Kaiser Family Foundation launched Kaiser Health News in 2009 to cover health care policy. The Center for Investigative Journalism underwrites specific media inquiries nationwide.

Knight’s grants, including \$253,000 for Pittsburgh’s PublicSource, run the gamut. It has supported 200 national pilots ranging from hyperlocal neighborhood news sites to a “virtual election” partnership with MTV, designed to engage young voters online.

“We’re looking at their reach, their penetration, their level of audience engagement,” explains Mayur Patel, Knight’s vice president of strategy and assessment. “How do these projects contribute to behavior change, shift people’s consumption, and inform and influence public policy?”

Philanthropic support of journalism has not been limited to nonprofit media. This year, the Ford Foundation gave \$500,000 to the Washington Post to expand its government-accountability coverage and \$1 million to the Los Angeles Times to increase reporting on immigration and ethnic communities.



In a recent review of seven funded projects, titled “Getting Local: How Nonprofit News Ventures Seek Sustainability,” Knight concluded that foundation support alone won’t guarantee the experiments’ success. Critical to grantees’ progress were three elements: a business-development strategy that created an ongoing revenue stream, such as the donor-funded news beats at MinnPost, a statewide Minnesota site; innovative ways to build community engagement, such as the Voice of San Diego’s Politifest 2011, which included a mayoral debate and an “idea tournament” modeled after “American Idol”; and the technological capacity to track audience interest, such as the Texas Tribune’s interactive features and highly searchable public databases.

And as the newcomers enter markets with corporate competition, Patel adds, there’s a broader editorial issue. “Non-profits can’t be duplicative of for-profits. It can’t just be more content on the same issues.”

### **SAVING A PLACE FOR NPR**

When Duquesne University announced its intention to sell WDUQ in late 2009, it was following the lead of cash-strapped campuses around the country. The license for the 62-year-old station, with its signature mix of “news, jazz, and NPR,” was worth \$6 million to the school. While the station offered a few hours of National Public Radio news programs daily, Pittsburgh was one of only two Top 50 metro markets without a full-time affiliate of the service. Pittsburgh Foundation staff met with a group of station employees who needed financial support for their bid.

“We weren’t interested in paying for more of the same, but in the potential to do something novel around news,” Oliphant recalls. A full-time radio platform for local news and investigation, with the public broadcasting marquee, was suddenly possible.

WDUQ staffers wanted to run a new station with a mix of NPR and jazz programming, the station’s long-standing formula. Boards of two other local public broadcasters, WQED Multimedia and alternative music station WYEP, discussed other collaborations but failed to craft a joint bid.

Meanwhile, the fate of the station hung in the balance. Unconfirmed rumors of an out-of-town bidder, possibly a religious broadcaster, continued. In May 2010, local foundations took the unusual step of funding a \$50,000 option to freeze the bidding for 60 days.

“With the option, we wanted to give the community process time to play out,” says Oliphant. “The conversation about PublicSource was going on, and we wanted to see if ideally there was a connection between what the foundation and the community wanted to do.”

Four funders, the Pittsburgh and Richard King Mellon foundations, the Endowments, and an anonymous source stepped up with \$4.1 million for the acquisition and launch of the new radio station, which eventually became the National Public Radio affiliate 90.5 WESA.

The “Coming Home” series, which debuted on April 14, showed the huge potential of web-based investigative news operation partnering with the radio news operation of an NPR affiliate. WESA was prominent among the six media partners that committed to a week of reporting from a range of news platforms on the transition to civilian life for returning veterans. Among the stories: examinations of G.I. Bill benefits and adjustments to college life on the PublicSource website. The City Paper, a print weekly, weighed in on recently returned vets entering politics. WESA examined public housing for homeless soldiers and broadcast a live public forum with veterans’ benefits experts. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette exposed the gap between civilian job requirements and soldier experience.

Post-Gazette Executive Editor David Shribman says the pilot was, in his view, a success. “The work itself was more than worthy. It was superb. And as a case study, it was a demonstration project of how disparate journalism outfits can contribute together.”

Providing all of PublicSource’s inaugural two-year budget, some \$800,000, and \$4.1 million for the launch of the new WESA station, Pittsburgh foundations clearly built the new projects. Their highly visible role has led to inevitable questions on how that support will influence reporting.

PublicSource editor Walsh, whose previous investigative career included stints at the Washington Post and the Philadelphia Inquirer, has heard the rumblings. “We will prove ourselves by what we cover and how we cover it. Essentially all you have is integrity and independence. If that’s ever in doubt, you have failed.”

Vince Stehle, executive director of Media Impact Funders, agrees. “[Most] foundations understand that it doesn’t do any good to fund reporting that has no integrity. We encourage funders to maintain appropriate detachment from editorial policies and judgments.”



## FOUNDATION-SUPPORTED MEDIA

Pittsburgh foundations' investments in local news media reflect a national trend in philanthropies giving their support to news organizations, particularly online media outlets committed to public affairs and investigative reporting.

### YALE ENVIRONMENT 360



Yale Environment 360 is an online magazine that covers global environmental issues, such as the impact of glacial melting in Greenland, above, and other Arctic regions. Also known as e360, the online publication is produced by the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies and Yale University.

#### Supporters

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation  
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

### PROPUBICA



The national media organization ProPublica specializes in investigative reporting, which it publishes on its website and distributes to news partners for publication or broadcast. It has won two Pulitzer Prizes, including one last year for its series on Wall Street business practices that exacerbated the U.S. financial crisis.

#### Largest Supporters

Sandler Foundation  
The Ford Foundation  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation  
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation  
The Pew Charitable Trusts

### MINNPOST



MinnPost is an online newspaper that covers a range of news and human interest stories in Minnesota. Among the most recent issues the site has followed has been the successful campaign to defeat a proposed constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

#### Largest Supporters

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation  
The McKnight Foundation

### TEXAS TRIBUNE



The Texas Tribune focuses on government and public policy issues in Texas, such as statewide education programs, and produces articles for its website. It also distributes stories to other news partners and regularly hosts on-the-record, open-to-the-public events such as forums and conferences.

#### Largest Supporters

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation  
Houston Endowment

### STATEIMPACT



StateImpact is a collaboration among National Public Radio and affiliates in eight states to provide broadcast and online news coverage on state public policy. Each state has a StateImpact website; in Pennsylvania, the focus has been on how natural gas and other energy resources are developed and regulated.

#### StateImpact Pennsylvania Supporters

The Heinz Endowments  
Moses Feldman Family Foundation  
Open Society Institute  
Wallace Foundation  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation  
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

Both PublicSource and WESA will continue to shine a spotlight on Marcellus Shale drilling in the region as a major environmental, health and business story that reverberates well beyond Pennsylvania. An ongoing PublicSource-sponsored photography exhibit, the Marcellus Shale Documentary Project, running through Jan. 6 at Pittsburgh Filmmakers' Melwood Avenue gallery, has received national attention, including being featured in the New York Times' Lens blog.

At WESA, President DeAnne Hamilton believes a non-traditional newsroom and partnerships allows for flexibility and compelling content. "We don't have beats per se, except for our behavioral health care reporting," she explains. General assignment reporters cover a range of local news categories, from politics to science.

### IS IT WORKING?

WESA's audience has dropped 50 percent since it switched its format and name last year, a common short-term trend. But under the Essential Public Radio brand and marketing strategies, the station wasn't rebounding to the degree that its founding board members had hoped. "Our older demographic, which tends to support public radio, was going away," says Hamilton. Consultant John Sutton advised a shake-up of the station's

initial schedule and a return to the station's call letters. WESA added airtime for Diane Rehm's daily syndicated interviews, and tucked more local reporting into an expanded two-hour "Morning Edition" from NPR. Armed with a new brand—"Pittsburgh's NPR news station"—managers are aiming for an average of 100,000 listeners a week.

On the fundraising side, individual donors have stepped up. WESA's four fundraising campaigns have raised more than \$900,000 from about 9,000 members. While watching its web metrics, PublicSource is launching a DIY advertising campaign, and envisions a series of public events to build its audience.

For the nonprofit upstarts, the touchpads that deliver their product may also deliver their future financial support. But for how long, no one can say.

"The hard truth about the future of journalism is that nobody knows for sure what will happen," writes Clay Shirky, a New York University expert on interactive telecommunications. "The current system is so brittle, and the alternatives are so speculative, that there's no hope for a simple and orderly transition from State A to State B. Chaos is our lot; the best we can do is identify the various forces at work shaping various possible futures." *h*

# here & there

## Cue the Breathe Scene

The Endowments' youth philanthropy interns branched out into performance art this summer by conducting two "flash mobs" in Downtown Pittsburgh's Market Square to promote the Breathe Project air quality initiative. Similar to what has been done in previous years, eight teams of recent high school graduates were assigned to local non-profits where they researched a theme, evaluated project proposals and recommended grant awards totaling \$25,000 from each group. This year's theme was improving sustainability in the Pittsburgh region, and the student groups worked with Pittsburgh Filmmakers and the Saturday Light Brigade and Allegheny Front radio programs to produce short features about local sustainability issues. One team — Seth Diggs, Sami Rapp, Bennett Gould, Shavonte Parker and Tia Torres — joined the Endowments' communications intern Brett Murphy in devising ways



to encourage residents to help clean up the region's air. The group designed bumper stickers, handed out informational "tickets" to truck drivers who idled their vehicles, and choreographed two flash mobs in which about 20 students — and a few Endowments staff — pretended to cough, wheeze and pass out because of poor air quality while a narrator urged passers-by to take personal steps to reduce air pollution and to visit [www.breatheproject.org](http://www.breatheproject.org) for more information.

Larry Rippel

## HAPPY 25TH BIRTHDAY, BENEDUM

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts in September with a "birthday bash" that raised \$575,000 for the Trust. Headlining the event at the center was Megan Hilty, one of the stars of the Broadway musical "Wicked" and the NBC series "Smash." Among those participating in the festivities were Endowments

board members Carol Brown, the first president of the Trust, and Judy Davenport, who attended with her husband Ron. Built in 1928, the Benedum Center was originally called the Stanley Theatre. After a \$43 million restoration, which was supported by several local philanthropies, including the Endowments, the theater was reopened as the Benedum Center in 1987.



One Young World

## GREEN PIECE

The public art piece "Cloud Arbor," by artist Ned Kahn, is a signature attraction at the recently renovated and renamed Buhl Community Park at Allegheny Square. Located next to the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, which spearheaded the transformation of the city-owned park, the formerly concrete space was known as Allegheny Square Park. It was redesigned by Andrea Cochran Landscape Architecture of San Francisco to include plants, grasses and trees, many native to Pittsburgh. Added was "Cloud Arbor," a collection of 64, 32-foot-high stainless steel poles, 24 of which have nozzles that emit water particles at high pressure to create fog around the poles. Named after the Buhl Foundation, a major contributor, the park also received funding from the Endowments; the Charity Randall, Grable and Claude Worthington Benedum foundations; the state of Pennsylvania; Diane and Guilford Glazer; and UPMC Health Plan.



### YOUNG WORLD VISION

Pittsburgh welcomed young leaders from around the globe in October for the One Young World Summit. Renowned leaders such as former President Bill Clinton joined about 1,200 delegates ages 18 to 30 from nearly 200 countries who participated in the four-day conference that looked at the roles young people can play in addressing global needs in areas such as health, education, business and sustainability. The Endowments was among several sponsors for the event, and supported the participation of 11 African American male delegates from Pittsburgh. As a requirement of the grants they received, the young men committed to produce local community projects based on information they gained from the summit.





### GRANTEE AWARDS

WQED Multimedia, Pittsburgh's public broadcasting station and an Endowments grantee, has been awarded a Mid-Atlantic Emmy for its 30-minute documentary "Pitch Perfect" about the Afro-American Music Institute's Boys Choir, below, and the mentoring relationships the group fosters. The film was the first in a four-part series designed

to challenge negative media images of black males. The Endowments' African American Men and Boys Initiative awarded WQED \$150,000 to produce the series. "Pitch Perfect" won in the Education/Schools-Program Special category.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh, an Endowments grantee, was one of two agencies within the 355-affiliate Big Brothers Big Sisters of America to recently receive the Pinnacle Award in recognition of high-quality service to children while increasing revenue for two consecutive years. The Pittsburgh affiliate also was named Mid-Sized Agency of the Year to honor its operational and programmatic excellence.



**BOARD AND STAFF HONORS** Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government has awarded Endowments Chairman Teresa Heinz, below, its Rachel Carson Advocacy Award. Mrs. Heinz was honored during a John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum titled "The Science and Policy of Environmental Toxics & Breast Cancer," a topic chosen in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the late environmentalist Rachel Carson's landmark book, "Silent Spring."

The Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children and the Allegheny Family Support organization have honored Marge Petruska, senior director of the Endowments' Children, Youth & Families Program, with an award created in her name. The Margaret M. Petruska Transforming Communities Award will be given every other year at the PAEYC and Allegheny Family Support conference to individuals who reflect Petruska's commitment to improving the lives of children and their families and communities.



Tom Fitzsimmons

**SIGNALS OF PROGRESS** Business leader and philanthropist Henry L. Hillman, below, chairman of the Henry L. Hillman Foundation, was among the Pittsburgh dignitaries at a September news conference who praised a Carnegie Mellon University signalization pilot project that has yielded dramatic reductions in traffic congestion and harmful vehicle emissions. The Traffic21 Program at Carnegie Mellon's H. John Heinz III College developed groundbreaking technology that allows signals to communicate with one another and adapt to the traffic in real time, reducing congestion. The technology was used in traffic-clogged sections of the city's East Liberty neighborhood, resulting in a 40 percent drop in vehicle wait time, a nearly 26 percent reduction in travel time, and a 21 percent drop in vehicle emissions. Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl said he would like to see the signalization program expanded throughout the city. The Hillman Foundation supported creation of Traffic21,



Joshua Franzos

which received \$170,000 in grants from the Endowments through the Breathe Project air quality initiative.

**HEINZ AWARDS** Endowments Chairman Teresa Heinz and the Heinz Family Foundation, which Mrs. Heinz also chairs, honored winners of the 18th annual Heinz Awards in October. The individuals recognized for outstanding contributions in the five award categories were: Mason Bates, arts and humanities, the 2012-13 Composer of the Year for the Pittsburgh Symphony; Dr. Richard Jackson, environment, a UCLA public health professor and an advocate for smarter community design; Freeman Hrabowski III, human condition, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and a champion of diversity in science education; KC Golden, public policy, director of public policy for the Seattle-based Climate Solutions and architect of responsible climate policies; and Jay Keasling, technology, the economy and employment, a leading pioneer of synthetic biology through his positions as a professor at University of California, Berkeley; CEO of Joint BioEnergy Institute; and associate laboratory director of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Each honoree received an unrestricted cash prize of \$250,000.

## MODELING SUCCESS

The Endowments has awarded \$900,000 to Robert Morris University to help create the RMU Research Center on Black Male Educational Student Success. The university will raise \$900,000 to match the grant. The goal of the center will be to help improve educational and career achievement among young black men by creating a model for success through documentation of the characteristics of males who have educational and economic accomplishments. The center also will conduct studies to track the experiences of black men as they move through the educational system. Rex Crawley, assistant dean of the School of Communications and Information Systems, will chair the center, making this the first endowed chair and research center at Robert Morris. The center is an outgrowth of the Black Male Leadership Development Institute, which was founded by Crawley and the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and receives funding from the Endowments and the Buhl Foundation. The institute provides programs for youth ages 14-18 that include leadership training and interaction with role models.

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

Howard Heinz Endowment  
Vira I. Heinz Endowment  
625 Liberty Avenue  
30th Floor  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-3115

412.281.5777  
[www.heinz.org](http://www.heinz.org)

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## House call. PAGE 4



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