



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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McAULEY MINISTRIES ANNOUNCES THE 2025 SISTER SUSAN WELSH GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD HONOREES

PITTSBURGH (January 19, 2026) – [McAuley Ministries](#), the grant-making foundation of [Pittsburgh Mercy](#), is proud to announce the recipients of the 2025 [Sister Susan Welsh Good Neighbor Award](#): Erikka B. Grayson and Belinda “Ms. Bee” Upsher.

Established in 2019, the award honors residents of Pittsburgh’s Hill District, Uptown, and West Oakland, the three communities historically served by the Sisters of Mercy and now envisioned as the Mercy Corridor. The award recognizes individuals who exemplify what it means to be a “good neighbor” through volunteerism, community organizing, and acts of kindness. Each year, two honorees are selected – one young adult (ages 18-39) and one adult (ages 40 and over).

Grayson and Upsher were chosen for their outstanding leadership and selfless acts of kindness that continue to transform lives and foster unity in our communities.

Erikka B. Grayson

Nominated by Ashley Comans and Dr. Margaret Starkes, Erikka Grayson is a lifelong Hill District resident whose leadership spans education, youth development, and family advocacy. She serves as senior director of the [Estelle S. Campbell Boys & Girls Club](#), overseeing programs that support hundreds of young people, and was recently elected [Pittsburgh Public Schools](#) board director for District 3. Her community-centered initiatives include founding [Bomb Moms](#), a platform that uplifts and connects mothers, and leading culturally responsive literacy programs through the [Margaret Washington Literacy & Inclusion Center](#).

“Erikka is someone who embodies leadership, compassion, and vision in everything she does,” said nominator Ashley Comans. “She approaches every role with integrity and has consistently gone above and beyond to ensure children, families, and the community as a whole are uplifted and supported.”

In response to receiving the award, Grayson stated, “I am deeply honored and humbled to be recognized as a 2025 Sister Susan Welsh Good Neighbor Award recipient. My work has always been rooted in service to children, families, and community – particularly in the Hill District.”

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She continued, "Each of these roles has reinforced my belief that lasting change happens when we invest in children early and show up consistently for families. This recognition reflects the collective work of a village committed to equity, opportunity, and compassion, and I am truly grateful."

Belinda "Ms. Bee" Upsher

Nominated by Candice Gormley and Nadine Masagara-Taylor, Belinda "Ms. Bee" Upsher has devoted decades of service to the West Oakland community. Formerly a childcare provider, she now serves as the community outreach coordinator at [The Corner](#) Community Center. Known for her boundless generosity, Upsher is the founder of the Warming Center and Breakfast Program for children at local bus stops. She also launched a community closet offering free clothing and household items, and regularly volunteers at monthly food distributions. Upsher's work extends beyond her formal roles, as she is a trusted presence in the neighborhood, frequently volunteering as a crossing guard and supporting families in need.

"Ms. Bee is the definition of what it means to be a good neighbor," said nominator Nadine Masagara-Taylor. "She rises to the occasion to meet the needs of others without expecting anything in return."

Reflecting on the honor of receiving the Sister Susan Welsh Good Neighbor Award, Upsher shared, "This award represents more than a moment of recognition – it reflects the power of kindness in action. Being a good neighbor means choosing compassion, showing up without being asked, and creating a space where others feel seen, safe, and supported. True winning is not measured by personal success alone, but by the positive impact we leave on the lives around us. I am deeply honored to be recognized for simply doing what comes from the heart: serving with integrity, leading with empathy, and believing that when one of us rises, we all do."

Recognition for All Nominees

This year, in appreciation for the many Hill District, Uptown, and West Oakland residents who embody the spirit of the Sister Susan Welsh Good Neighbor Award, McAuley Ministries provided \$500 to every qualified nominee. The 2025 nominees, alphabetized by last name, are:

Young Adult (Ages 18-39)

- Alycia Ford
- Erikka B. Grayson (award recipient)
- Glenn Grayson Jr.

Adult (Ages 40 and Over)

- Terri Baltimore
- Eric Howze
- Pyeong Kim
- Lisa Richbourg
- Belinda "Ms. Bee" Upsher (award recipient).

All nominees were recognized during a celebratory gathering at the Sisters of Mercy Convent. Grayson and Upsher each received a \$5,000 award.

"McAuley Ministries' work is based on the goodness that happens when individuals place the community before themselves. Celebrating the work of Mrs. Grayson and Ms. Upsher together with

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the work of all of our nominees was the best way for us to close 2025," said Marisol Valentin, executive director of McAuley Ministries.

Past recipients of the Sister Susan Welsh Good Neighbor Award include Sauntee Turner and Jordan Morris (2024); Sheila S. Petite and Nyabingi Michie (2023); Brenda Tate (2022); Ann Adams Simms (2021); Christopher J. Roach (2020); and Edna Council (2019).

EDITOR'S NOTE: Large size versions of the images can be found on the post of this News Release page on our website [News Releases Archives - McAuley Ministries](#). If you publish any of the photos, please credit as follows: Photos by [Adam Michaels Studio](#) for McAuley Ministries. Used with permission.

About McAuley Ministries

Named in honor of [Catherine McAuley](#), founder of the [Sisters of Mercy](#), [McAuley Ministries](#) is the grant-making foundation of [Pittsburgh Mercy](#). McAuley Ministries serves as a catalyst for change, committing resources and working collaboratively to promote healthy, safe, and vibrant communities. Grant-making priorities include capacity building, education, empowerment, environmental care, essential needs and social services, peacemaking, and whole-person health initiatives for nonprofit organizations which focus on the Hill District, Uptown, and West Oakland, the three Pittsburgh communities historically served by the Sisters of Mercy. McAuley Ministries also provides support to organizations in Southwestern Pennsylvania that are sponsored by the Sisters and collectively referred to as the Mercy Corridor.

Since its founding in 2008, McAuley Ministries has awarded 1,101 grants and community support totaling over \$64 million. It awards on average \$3.5 million in grants annually, making it one of the largest philanthropic foundations in Southwestern Pennsylvania. To learn more about McAuley Ministries and the initiatives it supports, visit [www.mcauleyministries.org](#), follow us on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#), or chat with [IRENE](#), our AI assistant.

About Pittsburgh Mercy

[Pittsburgh Mercy](#) is one of the largest community health and social service nonprofit organizations and providers in Southwestern Pennsylvania. It offers help – and hope – to 17,000 of the community's most vulnerable residents, including:

- People with complex behavioral health and physical health challenges,
- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- People who are experiencing homelessness
- People who need wrap-around services to live safe, healthy, and well in the community.

Pittsburgh Mercy's reach extends across more than 90 locations in Allegheny County. It is the largest Integrated Community Wellness Center (ICWC) in Pennsylvania and the only one in Southwestern Pennsylvania. It is a five-time awardee of Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Certified Community Behavioral Health Center (CCBHC) expansion grants.

Pittsburgh Mercy is a member of [Trinity Health](#), serving in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy. Its mission is to be a compassionate and transforming, healing presence within its communities.

To learn more about Pittsburgh Mercy or to donate in support of its important work in the community,

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please visit www.pittsburghmercy.org. Please follow Pittsburgh Mercy on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [X](#).

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