



U.S. Veterans Honored by Encore.org's 2013 Purpose Prize

Seven Awards in All for People Over Age 60 Solving the World's Toughest Social Problems

The Purpose Prize has become a “MacArthur genius award for people who develop a second career as social service entrepreneurs.” – *The New York Times*.

Contacts

Sara Ying Rounsaville, srounsaville@encore.org, 415-952-5121

Russ Mitchell, rmitchell@encore.org, 510-969-0801

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A veteran of the U.S. Navy organizes a network of volunteers across the country to teach disabled veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan how to combat stress — through fly-fishing.

A public relations executive helps wounded warriors find and renovate foreclosed homes – and transforms lives and neighborhoods in the process.

These are two of the seven winners of the 2013 Purpose Prize, awarded by Encore.org, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting people who translate decades of skill and experience into “second acts” that contribute to society’s greater good.

Now in its eighth year, The Purpose Prize is the nation’s only large-scale investment in people over 60 who are combining their passion and experience for the social good. Created in 2005 by Encore.org, the prize is aimed at those with the passion to make change and the wisdom to know how to do it, showcasing the value of experience and disproving the notion that innovation is solely the province of the young.

The awards include grants of cash: two winners will receive \$100,000 each and five winners will receive \$25,000 each.

This year’s winners:

* Vicki Thomas, Purple Heart Homes, Weston, Ct.

Thomas rallies communities around wounded soldiers, providing them with adapted foreclosed homes that improve quality of life for veterans and whole communities alike. (\$100,000)

* Ysabel Duron, Latinas Contra Cancer, San Jose, Ca.

Duron taps into her own experience as a cancer survivor to shine a spotlight on cancer for Latino communities across the United States. (\$100,000)

* Edwin P. Nicholson, Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc., Port Tobacco, Md. Nicholson mentors disabled veterans, healing emotional wounds through the power of relationships and the great outdoors. (\$25,000)

* Barbara Young, National Domestic Workers Alliance, New York, NY Young's rise from immigrant nanny to passionate advocate gives her a powerful voice in the fight for domestic workers' rights across the United States. (\$25,000)

* Carol Fennelly, Hope House, Washington, D.C. Fennelly runs a unique summer camp behind bars that is transforming federal prisoners into involved parents. (\$25,000)

* Elizabeth Huttinger, Projet Crevette, Pasadena, Ca. Huttinger's project is on a path to eradicate human schistosomiasis, a disease infecting millions of the world's poorest. (\$25,000)

* Reverend Violet Little, The Welcome Church, Philadelphia, Pa. Little is redefining the concept of "church" as she pastors Philadelphia's homeless in a church without walls. (\$25,000)

The Purpose Prize winners will be honored on December 5, 2013, at an awards ceremony in Sausalito, Ca. NBC's Jane Pauley will emcee the event for hundreds of Encore leaders and the Purpose Prize winners.

Twenty-one judges – leaders in business, politics, journalism and the nonprofit sector – chose the seven winners from a pool of more than 1,000 nominees. Judges include Sherry Lansing, former CEO of Paramount; David Bornstein, author and New York Times columnist; Eric Liu, writer and founder of Citizen University; and Sree Sreenivasan, Chief Digital Officer for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies, the John Templeton Foundation, and Symetra, The Purpose Prize is a program of Encore.org, which aims to engage millions of boomers in encore careers combining personal meaning, continued income and social impact in the second half of life.

“While Purpose Prize winners are helping to solve a wide range of pressing social problems, they have one thing in common,” said Marc Freedman, CEO and founder of Encore.org and author of *The Big Shift* (PublicAffairs Books). “They – and millions of others in encore careers – are turning personal passions and decades of experience into invaluable contributions across sectors, continents and generations, often through entrepreneurship.”

Short summaries for all winners follow. Photos are attached. Longer [bios](#) and higher resolution [photos](#) are available.

Vicki Thomas, Purple Heart Homes, Weston, Ct.

Thomas rallies communities around wounded soldiers, providing them with adapted foreclosed homes that improve quality of life for veterans and whole communities alike. Following a 35-year-career as a fundraising and marketing dynamo, she became the director of communications at Purple Heart Homes in 2008 in an effort to provide greater services for veterans who have service-connected disabilities. In just three years, Thomas helped take the fledgling nonprofit to new heights. She has raised millions for Purple Heart Homes in financial contributions and material donations. Revenue shot up 600% in her first year with the startup. She's developed an innovative program that matches veterans with foreclosed homes donated by banks, then raises the funds to renovate a home for the individual veteran's needs. It's a win-win for all generations—and communities too. It helps veterans to grow assets, towns to recoup lost taxes and neighborhoods that have struggled with foreclosures to stabilize.

Ysabel Duron, Latinas Contra Cancer, San Jose, Ca.

Duron is an award-winning journalist with more than 30 years in television broadcasting. She tapped into her own experience as a survivor of Hodgkin's lymphoma to shine a spotlight on cancer for Latino communities across the United States. To focus on the plight of low-income Latinos fighting the disease, Duron founded Latinas Contra Cancer (Latinas Against Cancer), an organization committed to educating, supporting and providing essential services to low-income Spanish speakers often overlooked by the health care system. Latinas Contra Cancer has offered a range of programs that teach more than 2,700 men, women and children about the disease, resulting in more than 300 preventative cancer screenings. The group has provided psychological and social support to several dozen patients per year. However, the call to action Duron answered has had an impact far beyond the Bay Area. Her passionate commitment is helping Latino communities across the U.S. gain access to cancer support, information and treatment. Her great empathy for cancer patients has made her utterly clear on her bigger purpose in the second stage of life.

Edwin P. Nicholson, Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc., Port Tobacco, Md.

Nicholson mentors disabled veterans, healing the emotional wounds of battle through the power of relationships and the great outdoors. A cancer survivor and war veteran himself, Nicholson was impressed by the fortitude of disabled veterans at the Walter Reed military hospital, where he was treated for prostate cancer. It spurred him to found Project Healing Waters, a program dedicated to helping disabled soldiers and veterans recover from the trying aftermath of war through the sport of fly-fishing. One-on-one connections have been key to Project Healing Waters' approach since the beginning. Nicholson knew there were fly-fishing groups and facilities all over the country. His innovation was to convince them to start, manage and lead fly-fishing instruction and outings with veterans. The quiet bonds forged over fishing lines between veterans began to transform lives. Again and again Nicholson heard from family members who said their loved ones had returned from war withdrawn, angry, and difficult to be around. But after fly-fishing with Project Healing Waters, they've become happier, more open and engaged. Project Healing Waters works with any disabled service member or veteran who wants to participate. Many are in wheelchairs or using prosthetics. A few are blind. Most participants are men, reflecting the population of disabled veterans. Nicholson says the impact "goes well beyond the mechanics of fly-fishing."

Barbara Young, National Domestic Workers Alliance, New York, NY

An immigrant from the West Indies who built a meaningful life on meager income, Young's gritty rise from nanny to passionate advocate gives her a powerful voice in the fight for domestic workers' rights across the United States. She's encouraged thousands to stand up for their right to earn a living wage, and counsels and trains others to become leaders themselves. In 2004, Young began building a movement to legislate a Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights in New York State, which would make overtime, paid time off and rest days mandatory. In 2009, when she heard then Governor David Patterson say on the radio that he'd sign the bill if it made it to his desk, she put on a full court press, becoming the engine behind passage of the law in 2010. The law is the first of its kind in the country, but Young is committed to making sure it

isn't the last. She's now a key player in the NDWA's expansion from 11 to 44 affiliated organizations with 15,000 members, up from 5,000 in 2007. Young's passion for serving her community has only just begun.

Carol Fennelly, Hope House, Washington, D.C.

A lifelong social activist who ran homeless shelters in the District of Columbia for 17 years, Carol Fennelly abandoned her plans to retire in 1998 when she learned that D.C. inmates had been transferred to Youngstown, OH. One woman made 10-hour round-trip drives twice a week to visit her son. Moved to answer a social need, Fennelly thought about opening a hospitality house in Youngstown for family members visiting inmates. She soon learned that while 93% of the federal inmate population is male, in sheer numbers there are more programs for mothers in prison than there are for fathers. She decided she had what it took to change things. "I had spent years organizing, dealing with government, making change happen, and that emboldened me to think I could go into prisons and start all these radical programs," Fennelly says. So she launched an encore career with Hope House, an innovative organization that helps prison inmates stay in regular contact with their children. In the past 14 years, Hope House has hosted 200 video teleconferences, 18,000 personalized book readings by fathers and 31 week-long summer camps, which allow kids to spend time with their fathers free of the usual restrictions that come with visitor hours and family chaperones. California recently decided to implement the Hope House model in its 33 state prisons. Prisons in Texas, Idaho and New Hampshire may follow. In 2013 Fennelly was honored at the White House as a Champion of Change.

Elizabeth Huttinger, Projet Crevette, Pasadena, Ca.

International public health expert Elizabeth Huttinger spotted a big idea in shrimp, and launched an encore career that could eradicate a disease infecting millions of the world's poorest. Huttinger's project – founded in 2006 - is targeting human schistosomiasis, an infectious parasite carried by river snails. Understanding that the population of prawns that eat those snails had precipitously declined, Huttinger, 63, has devoted her encore career to restoring the prawn population in the Senegal River Basin. Projet Crevette's mission is multifaceted: the restoration of the prawn population diminishes the spread of schisto, provides new economic opportunities to afflicted communities and heals families infected by the disease. Today, Projet Crevette is a prawn-farming microenterprise, operated by locals at public watering holes. It has brought social innovation, new microbusinesses, environmental restoration and improved health to communities. Huttinger is confident Projet Crevette will meet its bold goal to fully restore the indigenous prawn population—and improve countless lives in the process.

Violet Little, The Welcome Church, Philadelphia, Pa.

Reverend Violet Little is redefining the concept of "church" as she pastors Philadelphia's homeless in a church without walls. After 14 years working in pastoral care and psychological counseling, Little left behind her traditional congregation to create a religious refuge for the homeless on the streets of the city, which became the "Welcome Church". The church relies mostly on word of mouth, and services can pop up in a city park or on a sidewalk. No questions are asked, and everyone is welcome. The Welcome Church coordinates medical services through local universities, helps people get into rehab or jobs, and offers educational services to the public on the causes of homelessness. Little estimates 40 percent of her congregants have moved off the streets into permanent housing and the Welcome Church celebrates each and every one of them, many of whom stay connected with Little through their transition. Little's congregation has grown to include hundreds of homeless and non-homeless volunteers and she's become the voice of the homeless within the more than 10,000 congregations of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Read More About Encore's Purpose Prize at www.encore.org/prize.

About [Encore.org](http://www.encore.org)

Encore.org is a national nonprofit that promotes the idea that people in their second acts have the talent and

experience to solve some of society's greatest problems.

About [The Atlantic Philanthropies](#)

The Atlantic Philanthropies are dedicated to bringing about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. In keeping with the Giving While Living philosophy of founder Charles "Chuck" Feeney, The Atlantic Philanthropies believes in making large investments to capitalize on significant opportunities to solve urgent problems now, so they are less likely to become larger, more entrenched and more expensive challenges later. The Atlantic Philanthropies also seeks to encourage others of significant wealth to engage in major philanthropic pursuits in their lifetime.

About [The John Templeton Foundation](#)

The John Templeton Foundation serves as a philanthropic catalyst for discoveries relating to the Big Questions of human purpose and ultimate reality, supporting research on subjects ranging from complexity, evolution, and infinity to creativity, forgiveness, love, and free will. We encourage civil, informed dialogue among scientists, philosophers, and theologians and between such experts and the public at large, for the purposes of definitional clarity and new insights.

About [Symetra](#)

With more than 50 years experience, Symetra elevates people's lives through retirement, employee benefits, and life insurance products that help provide security and confidence.