



Press release

The Jacobs Foundation presents the Klaus J. Jacobs Awards, which include cash prizes totaling 1.2 million Swiss francs.

- The 2012 Klaus J. Jacobs Research Prize is being awarded to Prof. Dante Cicchetti, Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.
 - The Off Road Kids Foundation in Germany will be receiving the 2012 Klaus J. Jacobs Best Practice Prize.
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Zurich, November 2, 2012:

The Jacobs Foundation, a Zurich-based foundation that is active worldwide in promoting child and youth development, has announced the recipients of the 2012 Klaus J. Jacobs Awards. This year's Research Prize, which carries a cash prize of one million Swiss francs, goes to developmental and clinical psychologist Prof. Dante Cicchetti. The Best Practice Prize, which includes an award of 200,000 francs, goes to Germany's Off Road Kids Foundation. The awards will be presented on December 7, 2012, at a gala event at the University of Zurich.

“Seeing the positive”: Understanding resilience

Prof. Dante Cicchetti is one of the world's leading developmental and clinical psychologists. For over 30 years he has studied the consequences of child maltreatment and neglect, as well as the conditions that lead to resilience – the psychological capacity to withstand difficult life conditions.

A notable aspect of Cicchetti's work is that it looks at both psychosocial aspects, such as a child's family situation, and neurobiological and genetic factors. Relying on this multidimensional approach, Cicchetti seeks to decode the multifaceted and highly complex construct of human resilience and to develop appropriate measures to promote resilience. Cicchetti attaches great importance to combining theoretically-informed interventions with solid research; this approach forms the basis of his work, which has led to groundbreaking insights. Cicchetti has been able to dispel the notion that poverty and child maltreatment are directly linked, and that they both have the same impact on development. He has demonstrated that the way in which violence, maltreatment and abuse affect the body and the mind changes throughout the life course. For example, in a study examining the effects of maltreatment during infancy on the neural correlates of emotion, maltreated preschoolers displayed differential brain processing to angry facial expressions compared to nonmaltreated preschool children.

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“To see the positive and not just the problems – this is crucial when studying the development and resilience of maltreated children. It’s a dynamic process. There are things that can be done to promote resilience – even when children have had terrible experiences at a very early age,” says Cicchetti, who intends to use the cash prize of one million Swiss francs to expand his interdisciplinary research.

“The street is not a good place to grow up”: Finding opportunities for young run-aways

For nearly 20 years, the Off Road Kids Foundation has sought to help children, adolescents and young adults who find themselves living on the streets. “Extremely dysfunctional family situations, characterized by violence and abuse, are often the reasons why boys and girls run away from home, giving up any security they may have had. For lack of an alternative, they struggle to survive on the streets,” explains Markus Seidel, founder and president of the Off Road Kids Foundation. “The street, however, is not a good place to grow up.” Stealing, drug use and even prostitution are what life on the streets has to offer these young people on their own. Approximately 20 streetworkers are engaged in social work for the Off Road Kids Foundation in Berlin, Hamburg, Dortmund and Cologne, helping runaways find alternatives to life on the streets. In return, they expect the young people to be willing to play an active role and to have a desire to take charge of their own lives. “We are not a source of clothing or food, and we do not give them money. Our sole purpose is to help them find opportunities for a brighter future. We want to show these young people that hard work is a wise choice, and that it pays off,” says Seidel, explaining the principles behind his time-tested approach. Together with the staff, the young people try to get to the root of their problems. The streetworkers actively assist the runaways in finding solutions to their problems, go with them to government offices and agencies, look for training opportunities, and act as mediators in difficult communications between the young people and their families. Each year, they provide intensive help and support for approximately 300 young people. Since it was established, the foundation has helped more than 2,600 children get off the streets. Those who no longer have a home to return to and have not been taken in by the government’s youth welfare system can find a place in one of the Off Road Kids Foundation’s two children’s homes in the Black Forest – another important component of the foundation’s work.

Markus Seidel is thrilled with the Best Practice Prize: “This is the most extraordinary award that we have ever received – not only because it is a wonderful affirmation from our neighbors in Switzerland, but also because the cash prize will allow our foundation, which depends entirely on private financing, to secure and expand its support system for street children in Germany.”

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The Klaus J. Jacobs Awards

In memory of its founder, entrepreneur Klaus J. Jacobs, who died in 2008, each year since 2009 the Jacobs Foundation has presented two awards for outstanding achievements in research and practice in the field of child and youth development. The awards come with cash prizes totaling 1.2 million Swiss francs.

The **Klaus J. Jacobs Research Prize**, which includes an award of one million francs, honors scientific achievements that are of exceptional social relevance in promoting the development of children and youth. The Jacobs Foundation attaches great importance to the practical application of scientific findings achieved through interdisciplinary research.

The **Klaus J. Jacobs Best Practice Prize** recognizes extraordinary efforts by institutions or individuals to implement, in a practical setting, innovative ideas related to child and youth development. This prize includes an award of 200,000 francs.

Note for the editorial staff

Additional information and images of the recipients of the 2012 Klaus J. Jacobs Awards are available at <http://award.jacobsfoundation.org/press/>

The Jacobs Foundation

The Jacobs Foundation is active worldwide in promoting child and youth development. It was founded in 1989 in Zurich by entrepreneur Klaus J. Jacobs. The Jacobs Foundation allocates a budget of approximately 35 million Swiss francs per year to fund research projects, intervention programs and scientific institutions.

It is committed to scientific excellence and evidence-based research. With its investment of 200 million euros to support Jacobs University Bremen (2006), the Jacobs Foundation has set new standards for private funding.

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