

**Media release**

**The Jacobs Foundation announces the winners of the 2013 Klaus J. Jacobs Awards endowed with a total amount of 1.2 million Swiss francs. The awards are being presented for the fifth time.**

- **The 2013 Klaus J. Jacobs Research Prize goes to Professor Greg J. Duncan of the School of Education at the University of California, Irvine.**
- **Receiving the 2013 Klaus J. Jacobs Best Practice Prize is Germany's ELTERN-AG organization.**

*Zurich, October 18, 2013* – The Jacobs Foundation, a Zurich-based foundation that is active worldwide in promoting child and youth development, has just announced the recipients of this year's Klaus J. Jacobs Awards. The 2013 Research Prize, which comes with an award of one million Swiss francs, goes to economist Greg J. Duncan. The Best Practice Prize, with an award of 200,000 Swiss francs, goes to Germany's ELTERN-AG organization. The Klaus J. Jacobs Awards will be presented on December 6, 2013, at a gala event at the University of Zurich.

**Long-term consequences: Poverty in early childhood leads to diminished prospects later in life**

American economist Prof. Greg J. Duncan has spent more than 30 years investigating the impact of poverty on children's development. His research focuses primarily on issues of income distribution, poverty and child well-being. Trained as an economist, Duncan has always taken an interdisciplinary approach to exploring the complex dynamics of child and youth development, drawing on insights from the fields of economics, psychology, sociology, neuroscience and epidemiology.

For 25 years, Duncan played a major role in the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), one of the world's longest-running and most influential studies of human development. The study has been interviewing a representative sample of American families and their children since 1968, following children into the fourth decade of their lives. The study's data have allowed Duncan and his colleagues to find correlations between income in early life and life circumstances in adulthood: Children from poor families are less likely to finish school, and they work and earn less than their more fortunate peers. Duncan has also shown that low family income has a stronger association with circumstances in adulthood when it occurs during the first five years of life than when it occurs later on.

"Receiving the Klaus J. Jacobs Research Prize is a great honor, and it comes at a perfect time," Duncan says. He is currently planning a new interdisciplinary study to be undertaken in collaboration with leading neuroscientists and developmental

psychologists. The study will recruit a random sample of 1,000 young, low-income mothers of newborns. One group will receive a cash payment of \$4,000 during each of the first three years of their children's lives, while a control group will receive much smaller payments. "We want to see whether we can find a direct link between poverty reduction and brain development in very young children."

### **Supporting parents to provide better opportunities for their children**

For nearly 10 years, Germany's ELTERN-AG has been offering support to families in difficult circumstances. It began in 2004 as a university-based project in Magdeburg, initiated by Meinrad Armbruster, professor of educational psychology and child and youth therapist, and his students. Today it is a nationwide intervention program that has achieved great success and earned positive evaluations – a course for parents based on the principles of self-help.

"The families we are trying to reach have not had an easy life," says social worker Janet Thiemann, a former student of Armbruster and now managing director of ELTERN-AG. Single parenthood, low levels of education, unemployment and an immigrant background are some of the factors that push families to the fringes of society and into isolation. "We want to improve children's opportunities in life, and we are doing this by working with their parents."

ELTERN-AG, which includes a staff of 16 and 196 trained mentors, all of whom have a degree in education, takes a different approach than most early childhood education programs. Consciously recognizing the potential of parents who are excluded from participation in society, the program collaborates with them as equal partners. Mentors reach out to parents in their accustomed environment, inviting them to meet once a week to share their everyday experiences, joys and concerns. In a total of 20 meetings, the focus is on communication, learning to handle frustration and building a social network. This helps participants gain self-confidence and become better able to fulfill their role as parents.

So far, ELTERN-AG has reached 1,600 parents and 3,800 children. Today the program is active in 13 of Germany's states, working with more than 50 partners, and other cities are soon to follow. Interest has also been expressed in Switzerland and Austria. ELTERN-AG plans to use its prize money to open up new sites, giving even more families access to this program.

### **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.

### **The Jacobs Foundation**

The Jacobs Foundation is active worldwide in promoting child and youth development. It was founded in Zurich by entrepreneur Klaus J. Jacobs in 1989. The Jacobs Foundation allocates a budget of approximately 40 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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#### **Note for the Media:**

Additional information and images are available at

<http://award.jacobsfoundation.org/press/>