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2022 Pinnacle Award winners announced

Tulsa, Okla. – YWCA Tulsa in partnership with the Mayor’s Commission on the Status of Women is pleased to announce the winners of the 2022 Pinnacle Awards honoring exceptional women of Tulsa.

The winners are:

Anna C. Roth Legacy Award: Joy Harjo, the 23rd Poet Laureate of the United States, is a member of the Mvskoke Nation and belongs to Oce Vpofv (Hickory Ground). She is the second poet to be appointed a third term as U.S. Poet Laureate. Harjo is the author of nine books of poetry, two award-winning children’s books, several screenplays; and three plays. Harjo has produced seven award-winning music albums including *Winding Through the Milky Way*, for which she was awarded a NAMMY for Best Female Artist of the year. Harjo is a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, holds a Tulsa Artist Fellowship, directs *For Girls Becoming*, an arts mentorship program for young Mvskoke women, and is a founding board member and Chair of the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation. She has recently been inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the National Native American Hall of Fame, and the National Woman’s Hall of Fame.

The Anna C. Roth Legacy Award is named after Anna C. Roth, who founded YWCA Tulsa in 1914.

Arts and Humanities: Connie Cronley, Cherokee author, grew up in Nowata, lives in Tulsa and has been writing for most of her life. “*A Life on Fire*,” a biography of Kate Barnard is Cronley’s fifth book. Cronley’s career includes working as a writer for *Tulsa Tribune*, *Tulsa People*, and *Oklahoma Monthly*, serving as Executive Director of *Iron Gate*, and Managing Director of *Tulsa Ballet Theatre*, and a commentator on *Public Radio 89.5*.

Community Service: Brenda Alford is a descendant of Tulsa Race Massacre survivors and Black Wall Street entrepreneurs. A proud third-generation graduate of Booker T. Washington High School, she served as Chair of the Mass Graves Public Oversight Committee at the request of Mayor G.T. Bynum. Alford also serves as a board member at Greenwood Rising, and as a 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission member.

Corporate Business: Kuma Roberts is a leader in the Tulsa community, mobilizing companies and individuals to courageously create space for dialogue about diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. Roberts is the Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer at Arrowhead Consulting and worked for Tulsa Regional Chamber for 10 years as Executive Director of Talent Attraction, Retention & Mosaic, and most recently as Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Education: Dr. Deborah Gist is superintendent for the second largest school district in our state — Tulsa Public Schools – and leads our city’s public-school teachers in the education of approximately 35,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten to 12th grade in 77 district and public charter schools. She is the first female superintendent in the district's history. During her tenure at TPS she has steadily increased the percentage of students meeting their math and reading growth projections, collaborated on the development and delivery of Tulsa Race Massacre curriculum, and increased the graduation rate by more than 11 percentage points.

Entrepreneur: Wendy Williams is the owner of Health and Safety Education Consultants Training Center, an approved State of Oklahoma Health Department nurse aide registry program. Williams recognized there was a need to increase the number of training centers to help students become certified nursing assistants and enter other health service entry level careers. She is also the founder and president of Eastern Oklahoma Black Nurses Association, a local chapter of the National Black Nurses Association, Inc.

Health & Wellness: Zaida Kepford-Castro moved to Tulsa 17 years ago from Tijuana, Mexico. She is a servant leader who has promoted understanding and collaboration among minority groups: training Morton Clinic departments on how to work with the Hispanic community and providing pro-bono translation and interpretation services to Oklahomans Against Human Trafficking, Tulsa County Sheriff’s Office, Tulsa Police Department, Xavier Clinic, Little Lighthouse, and Sooner Start. She currently leads a health collective promoting access to sex education and promoting healthy relationships with Amplify Tulsa.

Rising Star: Amairani Perez Chamu is the Hispanic Resource Center Coordinator at Tulsa Public Library, creating programs for all 24 branches and locations across Tulsa County, and overseeing orders and purchases of Spanish materials for the entire system. She is Board President for the Tulsa Global District and is the Tulsa Director for Dream Action Oklahoma. She has led countless DACA clinics and Know Your Rights campaigns and has spoken with state senators to ensure the rights of the immigrant community in Tulsa.

The Rising Star Award recognizes a young woman who already has made notable contributions in her field.

Corporate Champion: AAON is a publicly traded company headquartered in Tulsa, and the representation of female leaders starts at the top. AAON has been recognized by 2020 Women on Boards as an Oklahoma "W" Company for having 20 percent or more company board seats held by women. AAON's eight-member board of directors includes two women, or 25 percent. Manufacturing companies often fall short in female representation: women make up 24 percent of the manufacturing workforce nationally. AAON trends higher than the national average, with women making up 29 percent of its workforce. AAON has been recognized as a Mosaic Top Inclusive Workplace by the Tulsa Regional Chamber and has also signed the Tulsa Pay Equity Pledge.

Each honoree upholds the legacy of the Pinnacle Awards, which is reflected in women who are role models in their professions, take risks on behalf of others, perform community service, and advocate for women's issues.

"Each year when we announce the Pinnacle Awards winners, I am honored to recognize these Tulsa women's achievements in many areas, including health, education, arts, business and community service," Mayor G.T. Bynum said. "These women represent the excellence and diversity that make our city strong, enriching our community and extending their influence beyond our city limits."

YWCA Tulsa's CEO, Julie Davis shared, "It's an honor to be able to tell the stories of women who are fearless change agents in our community. These women are creating a Tulsa that is More -- more inclusive, more representative, more creative, and more powerful because of their work."

Winners will be honored on Thursday, March 31, 2022. The Pinnacle Awards is a celebration of the investment that women are making in our community every day. It also supports the work that YWCA Tulsa leads to empower women and eliminate racism. To sponsor the Pinnacle Awards or get more information about this event, visit www.ywcatulsa.org/get-involved/pinnacle-awards/

History of the Pinnacle Awards

In 1987, the Pinnacle Awards were established by the [Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women](#) to celebrate the important contributions of women to the City of Tulsa. The presentation of these awards honored women who were exemplary leaders in the Tulsa community and demonstrated both professional success and commitment to service. In 2015, the Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women forged a partnership with YWCA Tulsa's event Women of the Year recognizing women who were role models and

embodied their mission of eliminating racism, empowering women, standing up for social justice, and helping families. Over the last thirty years we have collectively honored over 200 women, sharing their stories, amplifying their voices, recognizing their service, and congratulating them for their achievements.

About YWCA Tulsa

YWCA Tulsa is on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, freedom, dignity and justice for all. We focus on eliminating barriers for and investing in the success of women, girls and people of color. Each year YWCA creates real change in the lives of more than 10,000 women, men, and children through our Health Equity and Wellness programs and Immigrant and Refugee Services. For more information, visit www.ywcatulsa.org

About the Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women

The Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women acts as the central clearinghouse and coordinating agency for activities and information relating to women. The commission is charged with helping women develop a collective voice to influence public policy and effect positive changes in their lives, in addition to stimulating research in the area of women's legal rights; educating the community on the status of women by publicizing information on women's rights and obligations; reviewing the range of services available to women to enable them to fully contribute to society through their homes and participation in community life; and to strengthening existing services and assisting public, commercial, cooperative or voluntary agencies in pursuing needed services. For more information about the Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women, see the City of Tulsa [website](#)

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