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## HeartMath® Institute Presents Humanitarian Heart Awards

*Recipients honored for 'good works'*

**Boulder Creek, Calif., Jan. 14, 2017** – HeartMath Institute recently honored a group of individuals with its Humanitarian Heart Award in recognition of their caring and compassionate efforts to improve the others' lives.

It took five years for **Tammy Cunningham** to recover from the death of her 2½-year-old son and embark on a journey that led to co-founding a nonprofit foundation that has touched thousands of lives. In 2012, **Majd Kam-Almaz**, recognized a huge shortage of professionals to help Syrians fleeing their war-ravaged country, so he established refugee aid centers in Lebanon and Jordan.

Cunningham and Kam-Almaz are among the six recipients of the Humanitarian Heart Award, presented during a ceremony in December at a HeartMath event.

"The award recognizes the good works people have done," explained HeartMath Institute President Sara Childre. She noted that the recipients all have employed the HeartMath System of managing stress and self-regulating emotions. "It was the first time we have given this award and it was a great success."

Cunningham was honored for her and her late husband's efforts in establishing the nonprofit internationally recognized Cunningham Foundation when they were living in Colorado. The foundation partners with the people of Ethiopia in organizing and initiating sustainable development projects. These include the Hope Bracelet Project, Quarters for Kids, Kids Helping Kids and the Ethiopia Library Project.

Kam-Almaz, who spent his childhood in Southern California, devoted many years helping people in need in various parts of the world, including war-torn Kosovo and Indonesia, following the devastating 2005 tsunami there. He said he was compelled to help Syrian refugees when their mass exodus became a humanitarian crisis. He has been providing stress-management education to refugee children and adults and helped to build intervention and field work teams among other efforts.

Both Cunningham and Kam-Almaz, along with the other honorees, have been through extensive training in HeartMath interventions and techniques and are certified HeartMath Providers. The trauma and hardships the children and adults they continue to serve today have been shown in studies and clinical settings to provide relief and positive outcomes to thousands of people.

### **The other award recipients:**

**Michael J. Nila** worked for nearly three decades in law enforcement, from which he retired as a police commander in Aurora, Ill. He was recognized for that and his years since helping leaders and organizations around the world realize breakthrough

solutions and results. He founded Blue Courage, which designs and delivers personal and organizational development solutions worldwide. Nila has trained thousands of employees, including with the United States Department of Justice, the police departments of Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City and the military.

**Virginia Schoenfeld**, after a 20-year career in the Navy, established a community outreach program in 2012 to support Marines stationed at Camp Pendleton in California while also chairing the wellness committee of a nearby community collaborative for nonprofit organizations. Over a three-year stretch, the outreach program provided various services to an average of 90 Marines each month, including in HeartMath De-Stress Workshops, acupuncture and meditation. She continues in her private practice to serve veterans, people below the poverty level and the underserved and introduces HeartMath to all her clients.

**Christina and Peck Choi**, both born in South Korea, met while they studying in the United States and discovered they shared a dream of returning to their birthplace following retirement.

“We each wanted to help underprivileged children and young adults,” Christina Choi said.

Utilizing HeartMath workshops, techniques and technology, they have done that and more since 2007, including working with orphans around South Korea. The Chois currently head two nonprofit organizations: The HD Institute of Resilience and Positivity gives workshops and programs to train primarily professional people in counseling, emotion coaching and resilience; and the Association of Emotion Coaching, whose members are graduates of the HD Institute, do the same work as the institute, but with the general/nonprofessional public. The organizations’ mission is “to spread the seeds of happiness,” Christina Choi said.

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### **About HeartMath® Institute**

HeartMath Institute (HMI), [www.heartmath.org](http://www.heartmath.org), is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit research and education organization headquartered in Central California. For more than two decades HMI has researched and developed reliable, scientifically based tools and programs through its research and education divisions that bridge the connection between heart and mind and deepen people’s connection with the hearts of others. The HeartMath methodologies offer hope of new and effective solutions for the many daunting problems that face society by restoring mental, emotional and physical balance and maximizing every individual’s potential.