

Games for Change Announces 2026 Special Award Winners

Jenn Panattoni is honored as the 2026 Vanguard Award recipient; thatgamecompany receives the Industry Leadership Award; SpecialEffect is recognized with the Giving Award

NEW YORK, June 25, 2026 - Today, [Games for Change](#) (G4C), the largest nonprofit organization dedicated to harnessing games and immersive media for social impact, announced the special award winners for the [2026 Games for Change Awards](#). These awards recognize the exceptional contributions of individuals and organizations in the gaming industry that have made significant strides in driving positive change.

"The Special Awards are a chance to step back and recognize the longer arc of someone's work," said G4C President Susanna Pollack. "This year's honorees look nothing alike on paper: a first game, a body of work twenty years deep, and hardware built so more people can play. What they share is that each of them changed who games are for, and I'm glad we can showcase this breadth of work on one stage."

The 2026 Games for Change Special Award Recipients are:

Vanguard Award - [Jenn Panattoni](#)

The G4C Vanguard Award is given each year to an individual who has made notable contributions to the gaming community. Jenn Panattoni is a pioneer of social impact work inside the games industry. She founded the Xbox Social Impact team in 2018, where she spearheaded campaigns that generated more than \$250 million in value for nonprofits worldwide. She now leads her own agency, Aizle Impact, which builds cause partnerships across gaming and entertainment.

Industry Leadership - [thatgamecompany](#)

The G4C Industry Leadership Award recognizes companies doing exemplary work at the intersection of games and social impact. For two decades, thatgamecompany has reimagined what games can be, embedding emotion and human connection at their core. Their titles, including *Flower*, *Journey*, and *Sky: Children of the Light*, have shaped how the wider industry thinks about what games can express and the feelings they leave with players.

Giving Award - [SpecialEffect](#)

The G4C Giving Award recognizes companies, organizations, and individuals who make significant contributions through community initiatives, fundraising, or donations. Since 2007, the UK-based charity SpecialEffect has helped people with physical disabilities play video games using individually tailored assistive technology solutions, such as eye-control and

adapted controllers. Their work has broadened access to gaming worldwide, allowing more people to play in new and inclusive ways.

These honorees, plus the G4C Award winners, will be recognized during the G4C Awards Ceremony on July 21, hosted by actors Anjali Bhimani (*Overwatch*, *Apex Legends*, *Ms. Marvel*) and Osric Chau (*Supernatural*, *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*).

Regular-priced tickets are available until July 5, 2026, with discounts offered for nonprofits, educators, and students. View the full Festival lineup and register at festival.gamesforchange.org.

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About Games for Change

Since 2004, Games for Change (G4C) has empowered game creators and innovators to drive real-world change, using games and immersive media that help people learn, improve their communities, and contribute to making the world a better place. G4C partners with technology and gaming companies, nonprofits, foundations, and government agencies to run world-class events, public arcades, design challenges, and youth programs. G4C supports a global community of game developers using games to tackle real-world challenges, from humanitarian conflicts to climate

About thatgamecompany

thatgamecompany is the visionary studio behind the critically acclaimed award-winning titles *Flow*, *Flower*, *Journey*, and *Sky: Children of the Light*. Since its founding in 2006, thatgamecompany has been committed to developing broadly accessible, artistic, emotional, and enriching experiences that inspire human connection between all ages and cultures. The studio's work is now featured in the Smithsonian permanent collection and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, along with countless awards and nominations from industry groups. Led by co-founder and game director Jenova Chen, thatgamecompany is currently supporting its latest title, *Sky: Children of the Light*, which broke the Guinness World Record for "most users in a concert-themed virtual world" and achieved over 300 million downloads since its launch in 2019.

About Special Effect

SpecialEffect are transforming the lives of people with physical challenges right across the world through the innovative use of technology. At the core of this mission is their work to optimise inclusion, enjoyment and quality of life by helping people control video games to the best of their abilities. Their teams of occupational therapists and gaming specialists in the UK create bespoke control setups for hundreds of individuals each year, while their R&D team use

what they learn in the field to develop freely-available resources and solutions to help level the playing field for gamers with physical challenges all over the world.

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Games for Change Press Kit:

[Press Kit](#)