**Awards Descriptions**

**Collaboration Award**

* The Collaboration Awards recognizes individuals or organizations who work jointly with others to achieve a common goal toward the betterment of rural health.
* Our first recipient of this award is Chrystal Taylor with Jackson State Community College in recognition of her ability to bring together professionals from healthcare, social services, and community development to deliver high-quality education programming as part of a grant funded program aimed at training Medical Billing and Coding professionals. Chrystal has been a strong partner of Rural Health Association of Tennessee’s Workforce Development Team, and we thank her for her commitment to educating the healthcare sector and strengthening rural health.

**Exemplary Project**

* The Special Exemplary Project award recognizes an organization or group that has successfully developed a unique program or project that advances rural health.
* The first award goes to Dr. Sherry Jimenez. Dr. Jimenez serves as the Senior Associate Dean of IPE, Simulation and Accreditation at Lincoln Memorial University Debusk College of Osteopathic Medicine. In addition to her operational oversight of the multi-campus Center for Interprofessional Education and Simulation, Dr. Jimenez has designed and led multiple inter-institutional collaborations to advance interprofessional skills of more than 5,000 health profession students. Most recently this has included an annual opioid education symposium and TeamSTEPPS Essentials training for students entering clinical rotation. Thank you, Dr. Jimenez, with your commitment to educating our future healthcare professionals and working to reduce substance use disorder in Tennessee.
* Our next Exemplary Project award recognizes the 25th Judicial District Sexual Assault Resource and Response Team, or SARRT. The 25th Judicial District, in collaboration with the University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Nursing, law enforcement, victim advocate groups, and healthcare providers, SARRT was developed to provide resources and rapid response services for sexual assault survivors. SARRT is supporting survivors by coordinating a multidisciplinary, and survivor-centered response to sexual assault in a five-county West Tennessee area, bringing together stakeholders in Fayette, Hardeman, Lauderdale, McNairy, and Tipton counties. Accepting this award are Dr. Diana Dedmon and Dr. Lisa Beasley, with UTHSC’s College of Nursing – Thank you for your work in supporting sexual assault survivors in rural Tennessee.

**Award of Merit**

* The Award of Merit recognizes any individual or agency which made an outstanding contribution of major significance to the rural health movement.
* This year we are pleased to recognize Michael Meit, Director of East Tennessee State University’s Center for Rural Health Research as an Award of Merit recipient. Under Mr. Meit’s leadership, the Center works to improve health and well-being at the community, state, regional, and national levels. Since 2020, Mr. Meit has led the Center in rural-focused work, securing more than $12 million in grant dollars to match Ballad Health and the State of Tennessee’s funding. Over the past year, Mr. Meit and other faculty have published more than 20 peer-reviewed articles and presented at more than 60 conferences. Michael’s ability to build strong rural partners locally and across the nation supports rural health advocacy and is why we would like to present him, and by extension his team, this Award of Merit.
* Also receiving an Award of Merit is Leslie Brasfield. As a veteran health care provider, serving students with diverse backgrounds, Mrs. Brasfield has a long record of success at providing care to people in need. She is committed to excellence and to the well-being of our students and our community. Mrs. Brasfield is described as someone who will work relentlessly to obtain positive results for her school district and students. Thank you, Leslie, for your leadership and example of how to treat rural students, patients, and communities with honor, dignity, and respect.

**Bill Moats Meritorious Service**

* This award is in recognition of a member of the association who has demonstrated a true passion for rural health.
* This year we are delighted to present this award to Wilma Jean Pippenger. Ms. Pippenger is seen as a leader among her peers in the state’s Coordinated School Health Program, her community of Ocoee, and Rural Health Association of Tennessee. She exhibits the qualities of leadership in her ability to form meaningful relationships, her positive outlook and friendliness, steadiness through changing times. Ms. Pippenger, thank you for your leadership, not only for your local community, but across the state.

**Rural Health Hero**

* The Rural Health Hero Award is given to an individual or group of individuals who has gone “above and beyond” their normal areas of responsibility in performing a heroic, live-saving deed. It is given only at the discretion of the Nominating Committee and is not given every year.
* This year’s Rural Health Hero award recognizes the Medication-Assisted Treatment program at Access Medical of Monroe County, particularly Tammie Conner and Jan Stewart who work with all MAT patients.
* Access Medical of Monroe County’s MAT program is different from many others because of their focus on primary care integration. The integration of primary care in the MAT program results in each patient receiving an individualized and comprehensive MAT program and a team of providers that are working together to improve patient health. All patients work with Tammie Conner, a Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist and Jan Stewart, a Licensed Clinical Social worker, as well as Dr. Levin, Access Care of Monroe’s supervising physician.
* Tammie, Jan, and the broader team of Access Care go above and beyond to address not only the physical and behavioral health needs of a patient, but the non-medical needs that include coping skills, trigger response, and other community resources. Thank you for the lifesaving work you do on behalf of patients in need in your community.

**Connie Givens School Health Award**

* This year we are excited to announce a new award named after the late Coordinated School Health Advocate, Connie Givens. The School Health Award honors an individual in a K-12 school, district, or department of education setting, who has provided leadership in advancing school health initiatives.
* The recipient of the first Connie Givens School Health Award is Lori Paisley, who until her recent promotion was the Senior Director of Coordinated School Health at Tennessee Department of Education. Ms. Paisley has 29 years of service in education, starting out as a special educator before moving into district leadership. Her school district was one of ten pilot sites for Coordinated School Health in Tennessee, which paved the way for other School Health Programs and her eventual leadership of the state’s Coordinated School Health Program. Ms. Paisley’s long list of accolades, commitment to school health, and support to Rural Health Association of Tennessee is why we are honored to present her with this inaugural Connie Givens School Health Award.

**Al Grant Award**

* Al Grant has been an instrumental figure in the birth and growth of State Rural Health Associations across the nation. This award is bestowed upon an individual who has exhibited above-and-beyond exemplary-initiative in forwarding the cause of rural health in Tennessee over the person’s career, displaying the ability to bring together multi-faceted individuals to the common good of the health of all rural citizens of Tennessee.
* This year we are honored to present the prestigious Al Grant Award to Dr. David Reagan. During Dr. Reagan’s tenure as the Chief Medical Officer at the Tennessee Department of Health, Dr. Reagan championed initiatives that serve as foundation for many of today’s Substance Use Prevention and Treatment efforts. Examples include guiding the development of the Controlled Substance Monitoring Database that has led to a reduction of unnecessary opioid prescriptions and establishing a statewide network of women’s health experts committed to reducing the number of newborns with opioid withdrawal syndrome. Dr. Reagan has served as ONE Tennessee Chairman, where he continues to volunteer to increase awareness about best practices for treating chronic pain. His efforts have notably improved screening and care coordination for patients in the rural counties, particularly in the Upper Cumberland region. Thank you, Dr. Reagan, for your leadership that has improved primary prevention, treatment, and recovery in Tennessee.

**Eloise Hatmaker**

* The Eloise Q. Hatmaker Award recognizes an individual who has contributed outstanding service to the Association and rural health over a period of years. Eloise Hatmaker was instrumental in the establishment of the State Office of Rural Health, as well as the Rural Health Association of Tennessee and many other healthcare workforce initiatives.
* We are delighted to present this award to Ms. Ann Cranford. Ms. Cranford has been with the State for a total of 41 years and has worked in the State Office of Rural Health in the Division of Health Disparities Elimination at the Tennessee Department of Health for 20 years. Ms. Cranford works to ensure all communities have access to quality health care by routinely promoting activities which support the recruitment and retention of health care professionals in rural areas. As the Director of the J1 Visa Program that places foreign physicians in underserved rural areas, she maintains knowledge, memberships, and leadership positions that help strengthen our state’s healthcare workforce infrastructure. In the past two years she has filled all 30 placements, which is a first in the history of the program. Her sweet and caring personality and her willingness to help are qualities that make her an employee you want to emulate and be around. Congratulations, Ms. Ann and thank you for your service to rural health.

**Rural Health Professional of the Year**

* This Rural Health Professional of the Year award is bestowed upon an individual who has made an outstanding contribution of major significance to rural health and is a member of the Association.
* This year’s Rural Health Professional of the Year is Dr. David Dill. As chairman and CEO of Lifepoint Health, Dr. Dill serves as an influential voice for healthcare in communities across the nation – both those within Lifepoint’s diversified healthcare delivery network and beyond. Raised in a rural community himself, Dr. Dill has a unique understanding of how healthcare providers in rural areas can positively impact the overall health and economic development. Over the past year and a half, Dr. Dill served as the Chairman of Governor Lee’s Rural Healthcare Task Force. The taskforce completed a report of 14 policy recommendations aimed His knowledge of the challenges and opportunities that face families in rural areas is helping advance equitable and quality healthcare and improve the health and welfare of people in underserved communities throughout Tennessee.

**President’s Award**

* **Anna Hurt** has served in the role of East Tennessee Vice President the past four years, has lead the conference committee the past 3 years, as well as the East Tennessee Regional events. Anna can also be found at every Rural Health Association Advocacy event and has been an important mentor for RHA’s Executive Director. I personally am appreciative of Anna’s thoughtfulness, human resource expertise, and leadership among her peers and RHA’s Staff. Thank you, Anna for your service to Rural Health.