

Rural Health Awards

Each year the Rural Health Association of Tennessee recognizes individuals and groups of individuals from across the state of Tennessee who have dedicated themselves to the service of others within the field of rural healthcare. Below is a description of the award categories. For past recipients and the nomination form, visit RHA's [webpage Rural Health Awards](#).

Award Categories

Rural Health Professional of the Year

This 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. Consideration shall be given to all areas of rural health.

Nomination information should indicate that the individual's efforts have surpassed normal expectations and that efforts are exemplary of the dedication to the advancement of the health of the public.

Eloise Q. Hatmaker Distinguished Service

This award, renamed in honor of Eloise Q. Hatmaker, recognizes an individual who has contributed outstanding service to the Association and rural health over a period of years. Eloise Q. Hatmaker was instrumental in the establishment of the State Office of Rural Health. As its first director, Ms. Hatmaker worked toward alleviating health workforce shortages in rural areas and also helped establish the Rural Health Association of Tennessee.

Special Exemplary Project

This award recognizes an organization or group that has successfully developed a unique program or project that advances rural health.

Award of Merit

This award recognizes any individual, group of individuals, or agency, which made an outstanding contribution of major significance to the rural health movement. Nominees need not be association members. Factors taken into consideration include: broad benefits to health, innovative programs, unusual contributions, or activities that provide outstanding benefit to the public's health and are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Association. The nominating agency should not consider longevity, discipline, popularity, and service generally expected in one's job. There will be no special consideration given to nominees who are anticipating retirement or have just retired.

Rural Health Practitioner of the Year

This award is given to a direct service provider honored for leadership in bringing health services to citizens of rural Tennessee. Factors considered: must be a provider (physician or mid-level provider); must provide outstanding care; must be involved in the community; and must be providing a lasting contribution to the rural health care system in Tennessee.

Al Grant Award

Al Grant has been an instrumental figure in the birth and growth of State Rural Health Associations across the nation. There are 36 state associations in total. He is truly a proponent of rural life and is the ideal embodiment of the citizen legislator, combining his public health knowledge with political savvy and persistence to better the State of Tennessee and its citizens. 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. This recipient should display the ability to bring together multi-faceted individuals to the common good of the health of all rural citizens of Tennessee.

The award need not be awarded every year if the Awards Committee feels there is not a suitable recipient.

Rural Health Hero Award

This award will be given at the discretion of the awards committee to an individual in Rural Tennessee who has exhibited a similar heroic deed, going above and beyond. It may not be awarded yearly, and the hero does not have to be deceased because of the deed.

Connie Givens School Health Award

The Connie Givens School Health Award is 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.

Collaboration Award

This award recognizes an outstanding individual, organization, company, governmental unit, or other entity that has worked jointly with others to develop a process to achieve a common goal toward the betterment of rural health. This awardee demonstrates a team spirit that has motivated others to work with a positive synergy to cross disciplines or regions. This positive attitude and spirit of cooperation has transcended boundaries to ensure progress toward meeting the needs of our rural health communities.

Legislator of the Year Award

This award is given to a State Legislator who has demonstrated their continuing advocacy on healthcare for rural Tennesseans. The Rural Health Association of Tennessee's Legislative Policy Council chooses the recipient of this award. (Public nominations are not accepted)

2026 nominations are being accepted through September 11, 2026. The nomination form is on RHA's website: [Rural Health Awards](#).