

NCPHA Announces 2025 Scholarship and Award Winners

WILMINGTON, N.C. (Sept. 25, 2025) — The North Carolina Public Health Association (NCPHA), the largest Affiliate of the American Public Health Association, announced its 2025 scholarship and award winners during its awards ceremony on September 18 at the NCPHA Fall Educational Conference in Wilmington, NC. Award winners include individuals, health departments, and organizations that have made significant contributions to public health in North Carolina.

With more than 600 in attendance at this year's Fall Educational Conference, NCPHA members celebrated one of the association's largest annual events at the Wilmington Convention Center on September 17-19, 2025.

"We are proud to support and honor our current and future leaders through these awards," said NCPHA President Amy Belflower Thomas. "NCPHA award winners are more than honorees — they are the courageous, dedicated, and passionate driving force behind healthier communities in North Carolina."

Scholarship Winners

The 2025 Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship recipients include:

- **Kim McNeal**, who is pursuing a Master of Public Health (MPH) at Appalachian State University.
- **Karina Romero**, who is pursuing a Master of Public Health (MPH) at Appalachian State University.
- **Hannah Whitley**, who is pursuing a Master of Public Health (MPH) at Appalachian State University.
- **Tamra Morris**, who is pursuing a PhD in Public Health/Community Health at Walden University.

The Child of Member Scholarship recipients include:

- **Mackenzie Clayton**, who is pursuing a Master of Public Health (MPH) at UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health.
- **Kassidy Sauls**, who is pursuing an undergraduate degree in Nursing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The Robert Parker Leadership Scholarship recipient includes:

- **Celita Graham**, who is pursuing a Master of Public Health (MPH) at Appalachian State University.

Award Winners

The Dr. Ann Wolfe Endowment was established to combat infant mortality and enhance child health. The 2025 Dr. Ann Wolfe Endowment Mini-Grants recipients include:

- **AppHealthCare** for its Childbirth Education Program.
 - **Montgomery County Health Department** for its Safe Sleep Program.
 - **Warren County Health Department** for its Child Safety Education Program.
 - **Catawba County Public Health** for its Safe Sleep Initiative.
- The Distinguished Service award is given to a NCPHA member for their service to NCPHA. This year's recipient is **Suzanne Lea, PhD, MPH**, at East Carolina University.
 - The Partners in Public Health Award recognizes other organizations and professions outside public health departments who have made significant contributions to public health in North Carolina over the past year. This year's recipient is **El Centro** based in Durham, NC.
 - The Reynolds Achievement Award is bestowed upon the individual members of NCPHA who has made the greatest contribution to public health in North Carolina during the past year. This year's recipient is **Andrea Freeman, MPH, CLGFO**, at Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District Health Department.
 - The Rankin Legacy Award is given to a NCPHA member in recognition of the outstanding contributions to public health in North Carolina over the member's lifetime. This year's recipient is **Latonya Jenkins** at Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District Health Department.

The Dr. Sarah Taylor Morrow Health Department of the Year award is given to two health departments (small and large counties) for outstanding programs and efforts. The award recipients include:

- **Carteret County Health Department** for its overdose prevention efforts, resulting in a 69% reduction in overdose deaths in two years - one of the largest reductions in North Carolina.
- **Buncombe County Health and Human Services, Public Health** for its Hurricane Helene response and recovery efforts, including helping to stand up and operate with state, federal, and community partners five shelters and twenty Community Care Stations to provide essential services to residents affected by the storm.

About NCPHA:

The [North Carolina Public Health Association](#) was formed in 1909 by a group of concerned county superintendents of health in an effort to promote public health in North Carolina. Over 100 years later, NCPHA's 1,400 individual and organizational members continue working to improve public health by supporting education, advocacy, public awareness, and professional development as part of the [North Carolina Public Health Collaboration](#).

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