



AWARDS INFORMATION PACKET 2026

MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2026 Public Health Conference

November 18-20, 2026

Clyde Muse Convention Center

Pearl, MS



2026 MPHA AWARDS INFORMATION

The Mississippi Public Health Association has a long history of recognition of outstanding public health work in Mississippi. There are many deserving and long-serving professionals we would like to recognize as part of our Public Health Conference. Please assist us in this as we seek nominations in four award categories:

Prestige Awards - The highest honors awarded for four specific achievements and lifetime of work accomplishment in public health.

Awards for Notable Public Health Work - These awards acknowledge work that is going on in health equity; public health service and outreach (President's Award), and individuals new to the fields of public health who have demonstrated exceptional leadership (Rising Star Award)

Longevity Awards - Recognizes members who have 20, 25, 30, 35, 40+ years of public health service.

Section Awards - Our sections recognize outstanding service and professionalism in their respective areas of expertise.

DEADLINES

In order to plan and adequately prepare, all award nominations must be submitted by the deadline listed in each section of this application packet.

OVERVIEW

Where? All awards will be presented during the 2026 Annual Public Health Conference at the Clyde Muse Center in Pearl, MS

When? November 20, 2026

How? To be eligible for any MPHA Award, nominees must be a current MPHA member. If you are planning to attend the conference, you must register and pay the conference registration to attend.

Who? Should you have questions, please contact Lydia West, MPHA Executive Director (execdir@mspha.org)



MPHA PRESTIGE AWARDS

MPHA is proud to recognize outstanding contributions through our most prestigious awards in recognition of five outstanding representatives of public health in Mississippi.

Felix J. Underwood Award: Given to individuals who share concern with Dr. Underwood – “the father of public health in Mississippi” – for protecting the health of Mississippians.

Alton B. Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award: Given to individuals who exemplify the service standards set by Dr. Alton Cobb.

Jon “Vic” Bailey Award: Given to an individual who has performed outstanding service to his or her community or to an individual in the community during the preceding 12 months.

Larry H. Rouse MPHA Outstanding Member Award: Given to an individual member of MPHA for outstanding contributions, leadership, and achievements in service to MPHA.

MPHA Community Service Award: This Award was established in 2018 to recognize outstanding contributions to community (ies) by an individual, organization, or community who provided significant impact on the health and well-being of the citizens being represented.

NOTE: Except for the Community Service Award, individuals nominated must have been active MPHA members for at least five consecutive years to receive the award.

Nominations are made by members, sections, and other public health professionals from across the state.

Nominations are accepted by completion and submission of the Prestige Nomination Form and supporting documents.

Winners are selected by vote of the MPHA Board of Directors.

E-mail completed nomination form by October 12, 2026 to Lydia West, MPHA Executive Director (execdir@mspha.org) . Please put MPHA Awards Nomination in the subject line of the email.



PRESTIGE AWARDS NOMINATION FORM

Prestige Award: *(Choose one)*

- ☐ Felix J. Underwood Award
- ☐ Alton B. Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award
- ☐ Jon "Vic" Bailey Award
- ☐ Larry H. Rouse MPHA Outstanding Member Award
- ☐ Community Service Award

Person Submitting Nomination: _____

Nominee: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Title and Location: _____

Is this Nominee a current Member of MPHA for 2026? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Reason for Nomination: (attach other pages and letters of support as necessary)

Describe the nominee's exceptional professional achievements, contributions, or service to public health (200 words)

Please describe the impact of the nominee on local, regional, national, or international levels (200 words).

E-mail completed nomination form by October 12, 2026 to Lydia West, MPHA Executive Director (execdir@mspha.org). Please put MPHA Awards Nomination in the subject line of the email.



HEALTH EQUITY AWARD

The Health Equity Award recognizes individuals who are making health equity a reality in their communities. The award highlights innovative approaches to equity and shines a light on leaders across the state who demonstrate success in changing systems that impact health outcomes in one or more of the following areas: access to quality care, education, employment, income, community environment, housing, and public safety. These efforts overall improve outcomes for groups most disproportionately affected by health disparities.

CRITERIA:

- Demonstrate efforts that advance the mission of the Mississippi Public Health Association Health and Racial Equity platform.
- Demonstrate success in changing systems that impact health outcomes in one or more of the following areas: access to quality care, education, employment, income, community environment, housing, and public safety.
- Targeted efforts that improve outcomes for groups most affected by health disparities.
- Successful implementation of a systems change approach to reduce health disparities within the past two years.
- Ongoing community engagement.

PROCESS:

The MPHA Health Equity Award seeks to recognize individuals or organizations who have successfully implemented systems change approaches to reduce health disparities within the past two years related to one or more of the following areas: access to quality care, education, employment, income, community environment, housing, and public safety. The MPHA Health and Racial Equity Committee serves as the review and managing group for this award.

E-mail completed nomination form by October 12, 2026 to Lydia West, MPHA Executive Director (execdir@mspha.org). Please put MPHA Awards Nomination in the subject line of the email.



HEALTH EQUITY AWARD NOMINATION FORM

Person Submitting Nomination: _____

Contact Information: _____

NOMINEE

Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Info: _____

Official Title and Location: _____

Reason for Nomination: Describe the nominee's exceptional professional achievements, contributions, or service to public health related to the specific award. (500 words maximum). You may also provide up to three letters of support.

E-mail completed nomination form by October 12, 2026 to Lydia West, MPHA Executive Director (execdir@mspha.org). Please put MPHA Awards Nomination in the subject line of the email.



PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE AND RISING STAR AWARDS

The Mississippi Public Health Association has two additional awards that are decided and awarded by either the President of MPHA or the Board of Directors. The two awards are the President's Circle Awards and the Rising Star Awards. They were both established in 2019. The descriptions of the awards are listed below.

If you have a nomination to share with the Board of Directors for their consideration, the information must be submitted no **later than 5:00 p.m. October 9, 2026**. The information should be emailed to Lydia West, MPHA Executive Director, at execdir@mspha.org.

President's Circle Award

The President's Circle Award may be given for outstanding teaching, research, and/or service/outreach in public health and in recognition of contributions to the field in Mississippi's universities or colleges, state agencies, community-based organizations (non-profits), faith-based organizations, businesses, or other entities. Established in 2019, the President's Circle Award recipients are presented by the President to the MPHA Board of Directors with acknowledgement of their contributions to public health. President's Circle Awards may be presented throughout the year or at the annual conference.

Rising Star Award

The Public Health Rising Star Awards, created in 2019, recognize the accomplishments of individuals working in the profession for 7 years or less, who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, and commitment. The recipients of these awards are emerging leaders whose body of work demonstrates ongoing exceptional growth and high potential for future impact in public health. Individuals nominated for this award are poised to make significant contributions to the advancement of health, knowledge, and practice in the public health field.



PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE AND RISING STAR AWARD NOMINATION FORM NOMINATOR

Person Submitting Nomination: _____

Contact Information: _____

NOMINEE

Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Info: _____

Official Title and Location: _____

Reason for Nomination: Describe your nominee's exceptional professional achievements, contributions, or service to public health related to the specific award. (500 words max). You may also provide up to three letters of support.

E-mail the completed nomination form by October 9, 2026, to Lydia West, execdir@mspha.org. Please put MPHA Awards Nomination in the subject line of the email.



LONGEVITY AWARDS

If you have been working in the public health field for 20, 25, 30, 35, or 40+ years of service by the end of this calendar year, we would like to recognize you for a 2026 MPHA Longevity Award!

CRITERIA

Longevity Awards are based on five- year increments beginning with 20 years. The award is based on meeting the five- year increment during the current calendar year. (example: 20 years of service by the end of December 2026)

It is the employees/members responsibility to apply for this award, not your supervisor or organization.

MPHA Membership is required to be eligible for this award. If there is a question regarding your membership status, email execdir@mspha.org

Longevity Awards will be presented at the MPHA Annual Public Health Conference. Although attendance is not required to receive the award, conference registration is required if you plan to receive the award in-person.

PROCESS

E-mail completed nomination form by October 12, 2026 to Lydia West, MPHA Executive Director (execdir@mspha.org). Please put MPHA Awards Nomination in the subject line of the email.

MPHA will verify and acknowledge that you meet the service longevity criteria.

Ensure your MPHA Membership is current.

You will be asked to submit a picture for the ceremony.



LONGEVITY AWARD NOMINATION FORM

Name _____

Years of Public Health Service: _____

Brief Service description (ex. 25 years at MSDH or other public health organization): _____

Yes, I am a current 2026 MPHA Member: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Name to appear on Plaque (print clearly) _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Work Address: _____

E-mail the completed nomination form by October 12, 2026, to Lydia West, execdir@mspha.org. Please put MPHA Awards Nomination in the subject line of the email.



SECTION AWARDS

Section Awards are selected by individual Sections who have guidelines pertaining to each nomination and generally recognize outstanding contribution to a specific field or profession. Nominations are generally accepted from Section membership and currently include the following awards.

Wilma White Clerk of the Year – *Office Professional Section*

Durward L. Blakey Epidemiology Award- *Epidemiology Section*

Randy Caperton Administrator of the Year- *Health Administration Section*

Mary D. Osborne Public Health Nurse of the Year- *Nursing Section*

Alfio Rausa Medical Care Section Award- *Medical Care Section*

Public Health Nurse Aide of the Year- *Nursing Section*

Vonda A. Webb Nutritionist of the Year- *Nutritionist Section*

John Barr WIC distribution Clerk of the Year- *Office Professional Section*

TaWanda Ferrill Breastfeeding Award- *Nutritionist Section*

Judy Barber Social Worker of the Year- *Social Work Section*

PHERP Award – *Public Health, Education, Policy, and Research Section*

PROCESS

Section Award Nominations are sent to the appropriate Section chair. Contact information for Section Chairs is listed under Awards section on website.

Sections may have specific criteria established for their awards.

Deadline for Section Chairs to receive nominations is **October 12, 2026**

Deadline for Sections to determine recipients and notify the MPHA Awards Chair is **11:59 p.m. on October 19, 2026.**

Section Award recipients must be a current MPHA member.

For additional criteria and information, please contact the appropriate 2026 Section Chair. They are listed on the MPHA website www.mspha.org under About Us/Organization.

SECTION AWARDS NOMINATION FORM

AWARD: (Choose one)

- _____ Wilma White Clerk of the Year – *Office Professional Section*
- _____ Durward L. Blakey Epidemiology Award- *Epidemiology Section*
- _____ Randy Caperton Administrator of the Year- *Health Administration Section*
- _____ Mary D. Osborne Public Health Nurse of the Year- *Nursing Section*
- _____ Alfio Rausa Medical Care Section Award- *Medical Care Section*
- _____ Public Health Nurse Aide of the Year- *Nursing Section*
- _____ Vonda A. Webb Nutritionist of the Year- *Nutritionist Section*
- _____ John Barr WIC Distribution Clerk of the Year- *Office Professional Section*
- _____ TaWanda Ferrill Breastfeeding Award- *Nutritionist Section*
- _____ Judy Barber Social Worker of the Year- *Social Work Section*
- _____ PHERP Award – *Public Health, Education, Policy, and Research Section*

Name of Person Submitting Nomination: _____

Date: _____

NOMINEE

Name: _____

Address: _____

Official Title and Location: _____

Is this Nominee a current Member of MPHA for 2026? ____ Yes ____ No

Award Justification: (Additional pages may be attached if needed)

Email/Mail completed nomination directly to the SECTION CHAIR by the deadline 11:59 p.m. on October 12, 2026. Visit the MPHA website www.mspha.org under About Us/ Organization for information for each MPHA Section Chair or email execdir@mspha.org