



American
Heart
Association.

CHAMPIONS
FOR
Health & Hope

2025 NATIONAL VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Welcome as we honor extraordinary individuals whose contributions to the American Heart Association's lifesaving mission are transforming health in communities nationwide.

Hosts



Marsha Jones

Chairperson of the Board, 2023-25
American Heart Association



**Keith Churchwell,
M.D., FAHA**

President, 2024-25
American Heart Association



Nancy Brown

Chief Executive Officer
American Heart Association



Deborah Ferguson

NBC 5 Today Anchor
Dallas

Emcee



Scan to access full
profile stories on
the 2025 National
Awardees



Voice of the Mission Award

Susan Lucci

Award of Meritorious Achievement

Joshua A. Beckman, M.D.
Daniel Croley, DMD
Lip-Bu Tan

Healthcare Volunteer of the Year Award

Erin Poe Ferranti, Ph.D., M.P.H., RN, FAHA, FPCNA, FAAN

Louis B. Russell, Jr. Memorial Award

Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew, M.D., M.Ed., MPPM, FACOG

Earl B. Beagle Award for Staff Excellence

Robyn Lee Landry, APR

Ron Haddock International Impact Award

Dhruv S. Kazi, M.D., M.Sc., M.S., FAHA

Morgan Stark Memorial Award

Raymond P. Vara Jr.

Physician of the Year Award

William "B.J." Hicks II, M.D.

Gold Heart Award

Mitchell S.V. Elkind, M.D., M.S., FAHA
Bertram L. Scott





Voice of the Mission Award

Susan Lucci

Actress, Activist

*Go Red for Women®
National Ambassador*



From the Red Dress Collection® runway to Capitol Hill, Susan is a force for the Go Red for Women® movement.

The Emmy®-award winning actress and activist raises awareness of women's cardiovascular risk and lobbies for equitable access to care and increased federal funding of women's health research. She also lends her voice to PSAs encouraging families to learn CPR and recognize the F.A.S.T. signs of a stroke.

For Susan, it's personal. She narrowly escaped a heart attack and lost her husband to a stroke in 2022. The two were dining out several years ago, when Susan experienced

mild chest pain that quickly dissipated. When the pressure returned weeks later, radiating around her rib cage to her back, she attributed the sensation to a new garment she was wearing.

Days later, crushing chest pressure landed her in an emergency room, where she received the news: 90% blockage of her main artery and 75% blockage of an adjacent artery.

Her message to women today: "Put yourself on your to-do list and listen to your body to save your own life."



ABOUT THE AWARD

Recognizes an individual or a family who has made a major impact by using their voice and telling their personal story to amplify the American Heart Association's mission.



Award of Meritorious Achievement

**Joshua A.
Beckman**

M.D.

*Chief of Vascular Medicine
and Professor*
UT Southwestern Medical Center



Dr. Beckman has elevated patient voices, enhanced guideline efficiencies and championed coordinated systems of care during concurrent terms as chairperson of the American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology Joint Committee on Clinical Practice Guidelines and the association's Vascular Health Advisory Committee.

His innovative and bold leadership was instrumental in optimizing guidelines review and development, driven by three objectives: accessibility, timeliness and trustworthiness. He inspired a shift to a digital platform, making information searchable and enabling

rapid updates in a standardized format. He also led improvements in the peer review process, resulting in stronger clinical practice guidelines in a shorter time frame. Ultimately, his work informs efficient, evidence-based care.

As chairperson of the Vascular Health Advisory Committee, he helped establish the Peripheral Artery Disease Collaborative to improve detection, care and outcomes. The association-led collaborative unites organizations committed to increasing public awareness of PAD, preventing complications, addressing health barriers and improving quality of life for people living with PAD.



ABOUT THE AWARD

Presented for a specific accomplishment or project that supports the American Heart Association's national initiatives.



Award of Meritorious Achievement

Daniel Croley

DMD

*Vice President
& Chief Dental Officer*
Delta Dental California



It is not commonly known that chronic gum inflammation can contribute to coronary artery disease and diabetes, or that certain bacteria in the mouth can travel through the bloodstream to the heart and lungs.

Dr. Croley envisioned a collaboration between Delta Dental and the American Heart Association to educate patients and clinicians on the connection between heart health and oral health and to expand access to equitable, integrated care.

His vision came to life in 2023 with the launch of Healthy Smiles, Healthy Hearts™, a multi-year national initiative funded by a \$15 million stakeholder investment.

With Dr. Croley serving as executive stakeholder, Delta Dental and the association are engaging oral health clinicians to create a new standard of care for health screening at dental offices, incorporating blood pressure checks and primary physician referrals.

The Healthy Smiles, Healthy Hearts initiative provides the tools and resources for better prevention, early detection and patient care coordination.

The collaboration marks a pivotal step toward strengthening access to integrated care and emphasizes the role of dental visits as part of a holistic health check.



ABOUT THE AWARD

Presented for a specific accomplishment or project that supports the American Heart Association's national initiatives.



Award of Meritorious Achievement

**Lip-Bu
Tan**

Chief Executive Officer
Intel



A sold-out crowd of industry leaders in technology, health care and finance filled the ballroom of The Ritz-Carlton San Francisco on May 31, 2024, for the Bay Area Heart Ball benefiting the lifesaving mission of the American Heart Association.

United by Lip-Bu's leadership as Heart Ball chairperson in the association's centennial year, guests gave a record \$870,000, bringing the yearlong campaign total to more than \$2.8 million.

During the *Open Your Heart* moment, mother-daughter duo Jolanda and Kaelyn Graham shared Kaelyn's journey with congenital heart disease, including 41

surgeries and a heart transplant. Though doctors did not expect her to live more than a few weeks after birth, she stood before guests as a thriving 20-year-old — a testament, she said, to association-funded advancements in cardiovascular disease diagnosis, treatment and systems of care.

Lip-Bu said stories like these inspire his volunteer service. Recognized as one of Silicon Valley's most influential figures, he leveraged his vast network to make the Bay Area Heart Ball a historic success in support of the association's Second Century Vision, "Advancing health and hope for everyone, everywhere."



ABOUT THE AWARD

Presented for a specific accomplishment or project that supports the American Heart Association's national initiatives.



Healthcare Volunteer of the Year Award

**Erin Poe
Ferranti**

**Ph.D., M.P.H., RN,
FAHA, FPCNA, FAAN**

*Assistant Professor of Nursing
Emory University*



By her own assessment, Erin Ferranti is, above all, a nurse, now serving a year-long term as president of the Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association. She's also an educator, a researcher and a director every summer of the Farm Worker Family Health Program.

During what she calls "the best two weeks of my year," often working until 1 a.m. under big tents in produce fields, she and her 120-member medical team provide health care for more than 1,000 farmworkers and their families in southwest Georgia.

Dr. Ferranti's research studying the lifestyles of 800 Black women and their children in the Atlanta area, originally

a National Institutes of Health study, is now part of the American Heart Association's Research Goes Red program. It has expanded to look at the gut microbiome (e.g., bacteria and fungi) and lipidome (e.g., fats and oils) as they relate to cardiometabolic outcomes of pregnancy and risk in the months after childbirth.

And she is a member of the association team that writes evidence-based recommendations for postpartum care.

When her plate overflows and her to-do list is impossibly long, she thinks of the farmworker program which, she says, "fills my soul."



ABOUT THE AWARD

Celebrates achievements in cardiovascular diseases or stroke patient care, or improvements in the delivery of care.



Louis B. Russell, Jr. Memorial Award

Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew

M.D., M.Ed., MPPM, FACOG

*Professor and Academic Chair,
Obstetrics & Gynecology
Drexel University School of Medicine*

*Consultant, Women's Wellness/
Maternal & Infant Health*

Corporate Strategist, Equitable Health



Her dad was a Pennsylvania coal miner. Her mom was a homemaker with an eighth-grade education. And Dr. Larkins-Pettigrew says they were the smartest people she's ever known. Amid rural life in Lemont Furnace and, later, a public housing community in McKeesport, they raised their children to value scholarship and pursue excellence.

Her dad died of cardiovascular disease at a young age, as have several members of her family. To honor their memories, Dr. Larkins-Pettigrew devotes her medical career and volunteer service to under-resourced populations.

Her experience as a nurse, professor, naval officer, global health strategist and obstetrician-gynecologist have

brought unique perspectives to her leadership roles on the association's Cleveland and Eastern States Regional boards.

During her tenure as a senior executive with Highmark Health/Allegheny Health Network, she founded First Steps & Beyond to reduce infant mortality and preterm birth rates. She advocated for the association to receive a grant through the program to implement a Food Rx initiative focused on addressing nutrition insecurity among under-resourced expectant mothers and their families in Pittsburgh. The program unites doulas and caregivers to provide personalized nutritional plans and vouchers for fresh produce and supports successful pregnancy outcomes.



ABOUT THE AWARD Honors outstanding service in advancing health and hope for everyone, everywhere.



Earl B. Beagle Award for Staff Excellence

**Robyn Lee
Landry**

APR

*Executive Vice President,
Strategy Integration
American Heart Association*

Affectionately likened to the lead character in the former television drama, "Better Call Saul," Robyn is the go-to staff source for getting things done on time and on target. Since joining the Maryland Affiliate in 1989, she has moved through the ranks from field-level roles in Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and the Mid-Atlantic to executive-level positions at national headquarters within communications, health strategies, volunteerism and strategy integration.

In her current role, she ensures the association is optimally positioned internally and externally through her oversight of community impact, volunteerism, the National Resource Center, the National Engagement Center and the Office of Funded Programs.

She works closely with Chief Operating Officer Suzie Upton on key initiatives, including the association's 2028 revenue planning, evaluating corporate sponsorship proposals, staff training and more.

Additionally, she supports Chief Science Officer, Brain Health and Stroke Dr. Mitchell S.V. Elkind in building the association's brain health enterprise.

Among Robyn's hallmark achievements are helping launch Go Red for Women, creating new business models for health care quality improvement initiatives, leading the association's community and rural planning approaches, and developing and integrating field health initiatives.

ABOUT THE AWARD

Recognizes an employee who exemplifies leadership, professionalism, dedication and performance excellence.



Ron Haddock International Impact Award

Dhruv S. Kazi

M.D., M.Sc., M.S., FAHA

*Associate Professor
Harvard Medical School*

*Associate Director, Smith Center for
Outcomes Research in Cardiology
Director, Cardiac Critical Care
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center*



Dr. Kazi is a driving force behind the American Heart Association's international initiatives in four priority areas: scientific collaboration, professional education, quality improvement and health equity. His experience leading training in hospitals, academic institutions and clinical research settings across four continents gives him unique insights.

As co-chairperson of the association's International Committee for the past four years, his leadership has spurred revenue growth, strengthened relationships with partner organizations, evolved strategies for international emergency cardiovascular care and

hospital certification, and advanced global exchange of lifesaving science.

In 2024, Dr. Kazi co-chaired the Centennial Collection Science Advisory, helping to lay the groundwork for the association's Second Century Vision of, "Advancing health and hope for everyone, everywhere."

His combined expertise in critical care cardiology, clinical outcomes research and health economics informed a holistic global agenda addressing quality and cost-effectiveness to ensure good stewardship of resources and management of strategic partnerships.



ABOUT THE AWARD

Named in honor of the American Heart Association's 2012-13 Chairperson of the Board Ron Haddock for outstanding contributions to the achievement of international goals.



Morgan Stark Memorial Award

Raymond P. Vara Jr.

*2021-23 Chairperson
of the Board
American Heart Association*

*President and CEO
Hawai'i Pacific Health*



In his nearly two decades as a volunteer for the American Heart Association, Ray Vara's leadership has been invaluable in shaping the \$1.2 billion organization's operations and finances as it meets emerging public health needs.

During four years as treasurer of the national board, he helped consolidate the association's financial systems into a unified model with a focus on stability, clarity and long-term viability. Those efforts would serve him well when he became chairperson of the board in 2021 amid a global pandemic.

Serving alongside two association presidents, he helped

reimagine the organization's infrastructure, design new staffing models, and map out an organizational structure that enabled accelerated global growth.

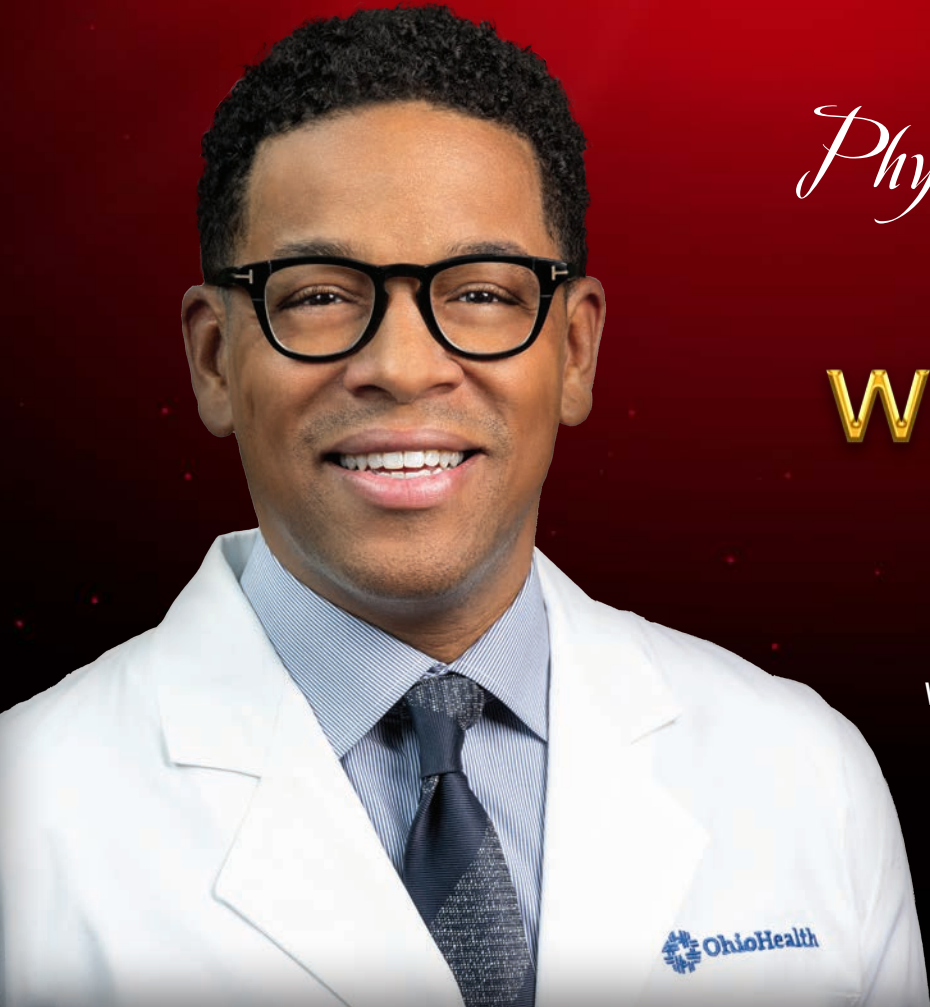
Today, Ray is chairperson of the Compensation, Benefits, and Human Resources Committee and a member of the Business Solutions Oversight Committee. He is also chairperson of the Operating Models Task Force, which he says builds the chassis on which all the association's programs and operations run.

He was a key member of the team that wrote the association's Second Century Vision, "Advancing health and hope for everyone, everywhere."



ABOUT THE AWARD

Honors outstanding leadership in human resources, finances and organizational operations.



Physician of the Year Award

**William "B.J."
Hicks II**
M.D.

Vice President, Neurosciences
OhioHealth



The son of a cancer physician and the grandson of a Baptist pastor, B.J. Hicks learned from a young age the importance of compassionate leadership. The vascular neurologist and OhioHealth executive sheds his white coat and tie and rolls up his sleeves to serve his beloved Columbus community on many levels.

Dr. Hicks has lobbied for a flavored tobacco ban — among other public health policies — appealed to the city council to prioritize equitable health and transformed local systems of stroke care.

He is the creator and OhioHealth physician lead of the city's Mobile Stroke Treatment Unit, which delivers

lifesaving therapies directly to acute stroke patients within the critical, first 60 minutes after symptoms begin — called the *golden hour*.

In collaboration with the American Heart Association, he developed and led the Franklin County Hypertension Network to provide resources and funding in support of evidence-based strategies for improving blood pressure control rates.

Dr. Hicks was the first neurologist to serve as president of the association's Columbus Board of Directors. He is immediate past president of the 13-state Midwest Region Board of Directors.



ABOUT THE AWARD

Honors longstanding commitment to the highest ideals of patient care and exemplary leadership in the American Heart Association's mission.



Gold Heart Award

**Mitchell S.V.
Elkind**

M.D., M.S., FAHA

*2020-21 President
Chief Science Officer,
Brain Health and Stroke
American Heart Association*



Growing up in New York, Mitch Elkind dreamed of becoming a writer. Although he was fascinated with the philosophy of the mind, he never imagined he'd become a neurologist.

Today, he is a renowned neurologist and epidemiologist and former chief of the Columbia University Division of Neurology Clinical Outcomes Research and Population Sciences.

In 2020, Dr. Elkind became the second neurologist to lead the association as president, building on the legacy of his mentor and the first neurologist president, Dr. Ralph Sacco. Alongside board Chairperson Bertram L. Scott, he guided the organization's pandemic response through the lens of science. He shaped neurology questions on the COVID-19 CVD Registry, took part in funding rapid response grants and shed

light on how COVID-19 affects the heart and brain.

Motivated to continue making a difference after his impactful presidency, he joined staff as chief clinical science officer. He is now chief science officer, brain health and stroke, with a goal of building the association's brain health enterprise through science, business and programs, and advocacy.

He formerly served on the New York City board then the regional board and three terms on the national board. During two terms as chairperson of the American Stroke Association (ASA) Advisory Committee, he exponentially increased the ASA's reach and resources, including the first AHA/ASA Guidelines for Adult Stroke Rehabilitation and Recovery in 2016 and stroke simulation tools for health care professionals.



ABOUT THE AWARD

The American Heart Association's highest volunteer honor, recognizing a lifetime of transformative contributions.



Gold Heart Award

Bertram L. Scott

*2019-21 Chairperson of the Board
American Heart Association*

*Retired Vice President
Population Health and
Value-Based Care
Novant Health*

As the son of Civil Rights activists, Bert Scott spent many Saturdays as a teen in the 1960s helping his parents organize peaceful protests of discriminatory business practices, to improve economic opportunity in his Chicago community.

That experience shaped his outlook as a health care senior executive and an association volunteer for over 30 years.

A thought leader and convener, he became chairperson of the New York City board, guiding consolidation into the Founders Affiliate. In Charlotte, he chaired the Heart Ball and co-chaired the 2018 Go Red for Women® luncheon.

His passion for the mission is personal: His dad died from heart disease. His first wife died of a stroke. In her memory, he created the Kathleen Scott Research Fellowship, launching the research career of its first recipient, Dr. Mitchell S.V. Elkind.

The two came together as national officers during the pandemic, Bert in year two as chairperson and Mitch as 2020-21 president, expanding the association's mission impact.

Bert's leadership inspired the 2024 Impact Goal to "advance cardiovascular health for all," accompanied by 10 Commitments focused on science, health systems, community-led solutions, consumer education and public policy. The foundation he laid is still saving lives.

As Chairperson of the Communications and Marketing Coordinating Committee and 2028 Brand Goal Workgroup, Bert's leadership was vital to creating the association's Second Century brand positioning and messaging and establishing a bold goal to introduce the brand to an additional 13 million people.

ABOUT THE AWARD

The American Heart Association's highest volunteer honor, recognizing a lifetime of transformative contributions.

