

History of the North Carolina Awards ^[1]

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by Amy Rudersdorf, N.C. Government & Heritage Library, 2012; Kelly Agan, N.C. Government & Heritage Library, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; Updated by SLNC Government & Heritage Library, 2021, 2023.

See also: [North Carolina Awards](#) ^[2]; [Black and African American North Carolina Award Winners](#) ^[3]; [North Carolina Awards ceremony programs](#) ^[4] (NC Digital Collections)



View the North Carolina Awards ceremony programs in the NC Digital Collections.

^[5]On June 22, 1961, the [General Assembly](#) ^[6] established the [North Carolina Awards](#) ^[2], the highest civilian honor the State of North Carolina can bestow. According to the legislation, called General Statute 140A-2:

[t]hese recognitions shall be known as the North Carolina Awards for Literature, Science, the Fine Arts and Public Service, and shall be conferred upon citizens of North Carolina for the most notable attainments in these respective fields during the current year, terminating four months before the date of award, though such distinctions can be exceptionally conferred, with the approval of the Governor and the Council of State, for eminence achieved during years prior to the award. 1961 Session Laws, pages 1572-1573 ^[7].

The first medals were awarded in 1964 to five recipients. Up to six awards may be presented each year.

Since its inception, more than 250 notable men and women have been honored by the state of North Carolina. Recipients include [William Friday](#) ^[8], [Romare Bearden](#) ^[9], [James Taylor](#) ^[10], [Gertrude Elion](#) ^[11], [John Hope Franklin](#) ^[12], [David Brinkley](#) ^[13], [Maya Angelou](#) ^[14], [Billy Graham](#) ^[15], [Branford Marsalis](#) ^[16], [Loretta Lynch](#) ^[17], and [Philip Freelon](#) ^[18].



The gold medal given to each recipient of the North Carolina Award was designed by Paul Manship and has the state seal on the front.

Nominations may be submitted by anyone, with final decisions made by the NC Awards Committee, comprised of five gubernatorial appointees. Recipients are typically honored during a ceremony that takes place each fall. The [North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources](#) ^[19] administers the award program.

View the ceremony programs by year in the [NC Digital Collections](#) ^[5].

About the Medals

The North Carolina Award medals were designed by the sculptor [Paul Manship](#) ^[20], one of his last commissions before his

death in 1966 at the age of 81. Each medal is 2 ¾ inches in diameter. It is intended to be worn on a red, white, and blue ribbon around the neck. The first medals were made of fourteen karat gold, although the mineral content has changed over the years to 10 karat gold (1974-1979) and gold-plated silver (1980-today).

Alphabetical List of Medal Winners

Abbott, Anthony A. Literature, 2015	<u>Golden, Harry</u> [25]. Literature, 1979	Nicholson, Freda. Public Service, 1994
Adcock, Betty. Literature, 1996	Goodmon, James. Public Service, 2000	Niven, Penelope. Literature, 2004
Ammons, A.R. Literature, 1986	Goodnight, Ann. Public Service, 2008	Noland, Kenneth. Fine Arts, 1995
Aneja, Viney. Science, 2007	Gordy, Walter. Science, 1979	Odell Jr., A.G. Fine Arts, 1966
<u>Angelou, Maya</u> [14]. Literature, 1987	Gottschalk, Carl. Science, 1967	<u>Owen, Guy</u> [32]. Literature, 1971
Anlyan, William. Science, 2002	<u>Graham, Billy</u> [26]. Public Service, 1967	Pagano, Joseph. Science, 1996
Applewhite, James. Literature, 1995	<u>Graham, Frank Porter</u> [27]. Public Service 1965	Park, Roy. Public Service, 1989
Atala, Anthony. Science, 2015	Gray, Robert. Fine Arts, 1998	Parker, Michael. Literature, 2006
Baker, Etta. Fine Arts, 2003	Green, Jaki Shelton. Literature, 2003	Parker Jr., Roy. Public Service, 2006
Barber, William J, II, Rev. Dr. Public Service, 2019	<u>Green, Paul</u> [28]. Literature, 1965	Parr, Robert. Science, 1999
Baric, Ralph S. Science, 2020	<u>Griffith, Andy</u> [29]. Fine Arts, 1984	Patterson, Jane Smith. Public Service, 2017
Barrax, Gerald. Literature, 2009	Gurganus, Allan. Literature, 1999	Patton, Frances Gray. Literature, 1970
Bath, Joanne. Fine Arts, 1996	Guthrie, Frank. Science, 1983	Pearson, Henry. Fine Arts, 1970
Bathanti, Joseph. Literature, 2016	Hamner Jr., Charles E. Public Service, 2011	Peiser, Mark. Fine Arts, 2009
Bauer, Margaret Donovan. Literature, 2017	Handler, Philip. Science, 1970	Pierce, Ovid. Literature, 1969
Bayes, Ronald. Literature, 1989	Hanes, Frank Borden. Public Service, 2003	<u>Pittman, Hobson</u> [33]. Fine Arts, 1968
<u>Bearden, Romare</u> [9]. Fine Arts, 1976	Hanes Jr., J. Gordon. Public Service, 1985	<u>Poe, Clarence</u> [34]. Public Service, 1964
Bennett, Betsy M. Public Service, 2014	Hanes Jr., R. Philip. Fine Arts, 1982	<u>Powell, William</u> [35]. Literature, 2000
Betts, Doris. Literature, 1975	Hardy, Martha Nell. Fine Arts, 2002	Preyer, Emily Harris. Public Service, 1998
Bevington, Helen Smith. Literature, 1973	Hart, John. M. H., Jr. Literature, 2013	Preyer, L. Richardson. Public Service, 1998
Biggers, John. Fine Arts, 1995	Harrelson, Walter J. Literature, 2004	Price, Reynolds. Literature, 1977
Birnbaum, Linda S. Science, 2016	Harris, Bernice Kelly. Literature, 1966	Proctor, Deborah S. Public Service, 2019
Blackmer, Sidney. Fine Arts, 1972	Hearn Jr., Thomas. Public Service, 2006	Ragan, Sam. Fine Arts, 1979
Blakeslee, Sarah. Fine Arts, 1994	Herring, William Dallas. Public Service, 1972	Rash, Ron. Literature, 2011
Bowers, Henry. Public Service, 2000	Hill, George Watts. Public Service, 1984	Rice, Oscar. Science, 1966
Boyles, Harlan E. Public Service, 2000	Hill, Robert. Science, 1984	Riggs, Stanly, Dr. Science, 2022
Bringle, Cynthia. Fine Arts, 2002	Hitchings, George. Science, 1980	Rivera, Jr., Alexander. Fine Arts, 2008
Brinkhous, Kenneth. Science, 1969	Hodges, Luther. Public Service, 1966	Roberts, Gene. Public Service, 2018
Brinkley, David. Public Service, 1988	Holshouser Jr., James. Public Service, 2006	Rodbell, Martin. Science, 1998
Britt, W. Earl. Public Service, 2019	Holt, David. Fine Arts, 2021	Rooke, Leon. Literature, 1990
Brodie, H. Keith. Science, 1990	Horton, Frank. Fine Arts, 1999	Roper, William L. Public Service, 2018
Brookhart, Maurice. Science, 2008	<u>Hotelling, Harold</u> [30]. Science, 1972	Rose, Charlie. Public Service, 2007
Brown, Robert J. Public Service, 2016	Howell, Claude. Fine Arts, 1985	Rounds, Glen. Literature, 1981
Brown, William. Fine Arts, 1991	Humber, Robert Lee. Public Service, 1968	Royster, Vermont. Literature, 1968
Broyhill, James T. Public Service, 2015	Hunt, Betty Debnam. Public Service, 2005	Rubin Jr., Louis. Literature, 1992
Bruck, Robert. Science, 1997	<u>Hunt Jr., James Baxter</u> [31]. Public Service, 2003	Russell, Charles. Literature, 1968
Bryan, Joseph. Public Service, 1986	Hutchison III, Clyde. Science, 1995	Sabiston Jr., David. Science, 1978
Bryan, Jr., Joseph M. Public Service, 2005	Ingram, Robert A. Public Service, 2014	Saltzman, Marvin. Fine Arts, 1998
<u>Burke, Selma</u> [21]. Fine Arts, 1982	Jackson, Herb. Fine Arts, 1999	Sancar, Aziz. Science, 2016
Byer, Kathryn Stripling. Literature, 2001	James, A. Everett Jr. Fine Arts, 2015	Sanders, Charles. Science, 2006
Caldwell, John. Public Service, 1987	Janty, R.K.M. Science, 2017	Sanders, John. Public Service, 1996
Carroll, F. Ivy. Science, 2010	Jenrette, Richard. Public Service, 1994	Sanford, Terry. Public Service, 1970
Cashion, Jerry C. Public Service, 2007	Johnson, Gerald. Literature, 1965	Scherr, Mary Ann. Fine Arts, 2003
Chambers, Julius L. Public Service, 2002	Johnson, Hunter. Fine Arts, 1965	Schmidt-Nielsen, Knut. Science, 1999
Chappell, Fred. Literature, 1980	Jones, H. G. Public Service, 2002	Schopler, Eric. Public Service, 1993
Chase, Nancy. Public Service, 1982	Jones, Mary Ellen. Science, 1991	Scott, Ralph. Public Service, 1981
Church, Eric. Fine Arts, 2022	Jordan III, Robert. Public Service, 2001	Scott, Robert. Public Service, 1996
Clayton, Eva. Public Service, 2022	Kamphoefner, Henry. Fine Arts, 1978	Semans, James & Mary. Fine Arts, 1971
Coates, Albert. Public Service, 1967	Kellenberger, May G.L. Public Service, 1969	Shapiro, Alan. Literature, 2014
Cochrane, William. Public Service, 1992	Kenan, Frank. Public Service, 1990	Shelton, Henry. Public Service, 1999
Cockerham, C. Clark. Science, 1976	Kenan, Randall. Literature, 2005	Simpson, Bland. Fine Arts, 2005
Cohen, Myron S. Science, 2013	Kenan III, Thomas. Public Service, 1997	Simpson, Vollis. Fine Arts, 2011
	Kirk, Phillip J., Jr. Public Service, 2013	Sloane, Joseph. Fine Arts, 1977

Coleman, Carolyn Q. Public Service, 2018
Collins, Francis S. Science, 2020
Colvard, Dean. Public Service, 1990
Cooke, S. Tucker. Fine Arts, 2000
Corbett, Kizzmekia S, Dr. Science, 2020
Couch, John. Science, 1964
Cowling, Ellis. Science, 1973
Cox, Joe. Fine Arts, 1993
Cram, John E. Fine Arts, 2013
Cuatrecasas, Pedro. Science, 1988
Dalton, Mary & Harry. Fine Arts, 1983
Daniels, Jonathan. Literature, 1967
Daniels, Julia Jones. Public Service, 1999
Daniels Jr., Frank. Public Service, 1999
David Jr., Edward. Science, 1972
Davidson, Jan. Fine Arts, 2007
Davis, Archie. Public Service, 1979
Davis, Burke. Literature, 1973
Davis, Charles (Chuck). Fine Arts, 1992
deButts, John. Public Service, 1979
Delhom, M. Mellanay. Fine Arts, 1997
Denny Jr, Floyd. Science, 1982
DeSimone, Joseph M. Science, 2009
Dole, Elizabeth. Public Service, 1991
Dykeman, Wilma. Literature, 1985
Eaton, Charles. Literature, 1988
Ebendorf, Robert W. Fine Arts, 2010
Edgell, Marshall. Science, 1994
Edgerton, Clyde. Literature, 1997
Ehle, John. Literature, 1972
Ehle, Rosemary Harris. Fine Arts, 2007
Eliel, Ernest. Science, 1986
Elion, Gertrude. Science, 1989
Ervin, Samuel J. Public Service, 1973
Etchells, John. Science, 1975
Ethridge, Willie Snow. Literature, 1982
Fields, William. Fine Arts, 1974
Finlator, W.W. Public Service, 2001
Fitz-Simons, Foster. Fine Arts, 1976
Fletcher, Inglis [22]. Literature, 1964
Fletcher, William. Science, 2000
Flood, Dudley E. Public Service, 2021
Franklin, John Hope. Literature, 1993
Frazier, Charles [23]. Literature, 2008
Freedman, Gerald. Fine Arts, 2008
Freelon, Philip G. Fine Arts, 2017
Friday, William. Public Service, 1975
Fridovich, Irwin. Science, 1985
Frye, Henry. Public Service, 2007
Gardner, James C. Public Service, 2016
Garvey Jr., Robert. Public Service, 1978
Gatewood, Maud. Fine Arts, 1984
Gerard, Philip. Literature, 2019
Gibbons, Kaye [24]. Literature, 1998
Gilmore, Voit. Public Service, 2004
Kishnani, Priya, Dr. Science, 2022
Koontz, Elizabeth Duncan. Public Service, 1977
Kreps, Juanita. Public Service, 1976
Kuralt, Charles. Public Service, 1987
Lambeth, Thomas Willis. Public Service, 2005
Lancaster, H. Martin. Public Service, 2011
Lee, Howard N. Public Service, 2015
Lee, William. Public Service, 1988
Lefkowitz, Robert. Science, 1987
Leonard, R. Michael. Public Service, 2010
Leslie, Bill. Fine Arts, 2018
Leuchtenburg, William. Literature, 2007
Lindgren, Robert. Fine Arts, 1980
Linney, Romulus. Literature, 2002
Littleton, Harvey. Fine Arts, 1987
London, Edith. Fine Arts, 1988
Long, William Ivey. Fine Arts, 2004
Lucas, John Harding. Public Service, 2013
Lynch, Loretta E [17]. Public Service, 2017
Mackay, Trudy F. C. Science, 2011
Madey, John. Science, 1992
Maron, Margaret. Literature, 2008
Marsalis, Branford. Fine Arts, 2011
Martin, James. Public Service, 2008
Matheson, Elizabeth. Fine Arts, 2004
Mayo, John. Science, 1995
McBride, Patricia. Fine Arts, 2015
McCain, Betty Ray. Public Service, 2009
McCall, Adeline. Fine Arts, 1981
McColl Jr, Hugh L. Public Service, 2009
McCorkle, Jill. Literature, 1999
McFee, Michael A. Literature, 2018
McGlohon, Loonis. Fine Arts, 1989
McKay, Martha. Public Service, 1996
Meredith, Jesse. Public Service, 1991
Merritt, Hiram Houston. Science, 1967
Meymandi, Assad. Fine Arts, 2016
Michaux, Mickey. Public Service, 2022
Miller, Heather. Literature, 1983
Millhouse, Barbara B. Fine Arts, 2018
Mitchell Jr., Burley. Public Service, 2007
Mitchell, Joseph. Literature, 1984
Mitchiner, Reginald. Science, 1977
Modrich, Paul L. Science, 2016
Moore, Dan. Public Service, 1980
Moore, Jeanelle. Public Service, 1980
Moore, Lenard D. Literature, 2014
Morehead, John. Public Service, 1964
Morgan, Robert. Literature, 1991
Morton, Hugh. Public Service, 1983
Murray, Royce W. Science, 2001
Narayan, Jagdish (Jay). Science, 2014
Ness, Kenneth. Fine Arts, 1973
Newman, Margaret S. "Tog." Public Service, 2010
Smith, Arthur. Fine Arts, 2001
Smith, Dean. Public Service, 2008
Smith, Lee. Literature, 1984
Smithies, Oliver. Science, 1993
Spaulding, Elna. Public Service, 1997
Spaulding, Maria F. Public Service, 2021
Speight, Francis [36]. Fine Arts, 1964
Spencer, Elizabeth. Literature, 1994
Stafford, Darrel. Science, 2007
Stanback, Fred & Alice. Public Service, 2008
Stanford Jr., Charles. Fine Arts, 1969
Stannett, Vivian. Science, 1981
Stem Jr., Thad. Literature, 1974 [37]
Stephens, Stanley. Science, 1968
Stephenson, Shelby. Literature, 2001
Sultan, Donald. Fine Arts, 2010
Swalin, Benjamin F. Fine Arts, 1967
Swalin, Maxine. Public Service, 1989
Talley, André Leon. Literature, 2021
Talley Jr., Banks. Public Service, 1995
Taylor, Billy. Fine Arts, 1993
Taylor, James [10]. Fine Arts, 1998
Thornton, William. Science, 2003
Thorp, Bo. Fine Arts, 2009
Thurman, Maxwell. Public Service, 1992
Timberlake, Bob [38]. Fine Arts, 1990
Tynes, Harriet. Public Service, 1978
Tyson, Timothy B. Literature, 2021
Walker, LeRoy T. Public Service, 2004
Walser, Richard [39]. Literature, 1976
Wani, Mansukh. Science, 2005
Ward, Robert. Fine Arts, 1975
Watson, Doc [40]. Fine Arts, 1986
Waynick, Capus [41]. Public Service, 1971
Weatherford, Carole Boston. Literature, 2010
Webb, James E. [42] Public Service, 1971
Wellman, Manly Wade [43]. Literature, 1978
Wheeler, Lawrence J. Fine Arts, 2019
Wicker, Tom. Literature, 1981
Wilfer, Catherine M., MD. Science, 2019
Wilkerson, Annie Louise. Science, 2004
Williams, Jonathan. Fine Arts, 1977
Williams, William T. Fine Arts, 2006
Wilson, Blake S. Science, 2021
Wilson, Edwin Graves. Public Service, 2002
Wilson, Emily Herring. Literature, 2006
Winston, Ellen Black [44]. Public Service, 1974
Wolf, Frederick. Science, 1965
Wolfram, Walt. Public Service, 2013
Wood III, Ira David. Fine Arts, 2014
Woodward, James H. Public Service, 2017
Wyngaarden, James. Science, 1974
Zucchini, David. Literature, 2022

More About North Carolina Award Recipients

Biographical essays are available for each North Carolina Award recipient in the ceremony program for that year. Ceremony programs are accessible [here in the NC Digital Collections](#).^[4]

A list of Black and African American recipients of the North Carolina Award can be found [here on NCPedia](#) ^[3].

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