

## History of the North Carolina Awards <sup>[1]</sup>

### History of the North Carolina Awards

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](#) <sup>[2]</sup>; [Black and African American North Carolina Award Winners](#) <sup>[3]</sup>; [North Carolina Awards ceremony programs](#) <sup>[4]</sup> (NC Digital Collections)



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

<sup>[5]</sup>On June 22, 1961, the [General Assembly](#) <sup>[6]</sup> established the [North Carolina Awards](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, 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 <sup>[7]</sup>.*

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](#) <sup>[8]</sup>, [Romare Bearden](#) <sup>[9]</sup>, [James Taylor](#) <sup>[10]</sup>, [Gertrude Elion](#) <sup>[11]</sup>, [John Hope Franklin](#) <sup>[12]</sup>, [David Brinkley](#) <sup>[13]</sup>, [Maya Angelou](#) <sup>[14]</sup>, [Billy Graham](#) <sup>[15]</sup>, [Branford Marsalis](#) <sup>[16]</sup>, [Loretta Lynch](#) <sup>[17]</sup>, and [Philip Freelon](#) <sup>[18]</sup>.



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](#) <sup>[19]</sup> administers the award program.

View the ceremony programs by year in the [NC Digital Collections](#) <sup>[5]</sup>.

#### About the Medals

The North Carolina Award medals were designed by the sculptor [Paul Manship](#) <sup>[20]</sup>, 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. Everette 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](#).<sup>[4]</sup>

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

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#### Authors:

[Agan, Kelly](#) <sup>[50]</sup>

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