

History of the North Carolina Awards ^[1]

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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.

See also: [North Carolina Awards](#) ^[2] (*Encyclopedia of North Carolina*); [North Carolina Awards ceremony programs](#) ^[3] (NC Digital Collections)



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

^[3]On June 22, 1961, the [General Assembly](#) ^[4] 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 ^[5].

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](#) ^[6], [Romare Bearden](#) ^[7], [James Taylor](#) ^[8], [Gertrude Elion](#) ^[9], [John Hope Franklin](#) ^[10], [David Brinkley](#) ^[11], [Maya Angelou](#) ^[12], [Billy Graham](#) ^[13], [Branford Marsalis](#) ^[14], Loretta Lynch, and Philip Freelon.



NC Awards medal

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 Cultural Resources](#) ^[15] administers the award program.

View the ceremony programs by year in the [NC Digital Collections](#) ^[3].

About the Medals

The North Carolina Award medals were designed by the sculptor Paul Manship ^[16], 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

Biographical essays are available for each North Carolina Award recipient in the ceremony program for that year. Ceremony programs are online at <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/search/searchterm/8187216/field/identi> ^[17].

Abbott, Anthony A. Literature, 2015
 Adcock, Betty. Literature, 1996
 Ammons, A.R. Literature, 1986
 Aneja, Viney. Science, 2007
Angelou, Maya ^[12]. Literature, 1987
 Anlyan, William. Science, 2002
 Applewhite, James. Literature, 1995
 Atala, Anthony. Science, 2015
 Baker, Etta. Fine Arts, 2003
 Barber, William J, II, Rev. Dr. Public Service, 2019
 Barrax, Gerald. Literature, 2009
 Bath, Joanne. Fine Arts, 1996
 Bathanti, Joseph. Literature, 2016
 Bauer, Margaret Donovan. Literature, 2017
 Bayes, Ronald. Literature, 1989
 Bearden, Romare. Fine Arts, 1976
 Bennett, Betsy M. Public Service, 2014
 Betts, Doris. Literature, 1975
 Bevington, Helen Smith. Literature, 1973
 Biggers, John. Fine Arts, 1995
 Birnbaum, Linda S. Science, 2016
 Blackmer, Sidney. Fine Arts, 1972
 Blakeslee, Sarah. Fine Arts, 1994
 Bowers, Henry. Public Service, 2000
 Boyles, Harlan E. Public Service, 2000
 Bringle, Cynthia. Fine Arts, 2002
 Brinkhous, Kenneth. Science, 1969
 Brinkley, David. Public Service, 1988
 Britt, W. Earl. Public Service, 2019
 Brodie, H. Keith. Science, 1990
 Brookhart, Maurice. Science, 2008
 Brown, Robert J. Public Service, 2016
 Brown, William. Fine Arts, 1991
 Broyhill, James T. Public Service, 2015
 Bruck, Robert. Science, 1997
 Bryan, Joseph. Public Service, 1986
 Bryan, Jr., Joseph M. Public Service, 2005
 Burke, Selma. Fine Arts, 1982
 Byer, Kathryn Stripling. Literature, 2001
 Caldwell, John. Public Service, 1987
 Carroll, F. Ivy. Science, 2010
 Cashion, Jerry C. Public Service, 2007
 Chambers, Julius L. Public Service, 2002
 Chappell, Fred. Literature, 1980
 Chase, Nancy. Public Service, 1982
 Coates, Albert. Public Service, 1967
 Cochrane, William. Public Service, 1992
 Cockerham, C. Clark. Science, 1976
 Green, Jaki Shelton. Literature, 2003
Green, Paul ^[24]. Literature, 1965
Griffith, Andy ^[25]. Fine Arts, 1984
 Gurganus, Allan. Literature, 1999
 Guthrie, Frank. Science, 1983
 Hamner Jr., Charles E. Public Service, 2011
 Handler, Philip. Science, 1970
 Hanes, Frank Borden. Public Service, 2003
 Hanes Jr., J. Gordon. Public Service, 1985
 Hanes Jr., R. Philip. Fine Arts, 1982
 Hardy, Martha Nell. Fine Arts, 2002
 Hart, John. M. H., Jr. Literature, 2013
 Harrelson, Walter J. Literature, 2004
 Harris, Bernice Kelly. Literature, 1966
 Hearn Jr., Thomas. Public Service, 2006
 Herring, William Dallas. Public Service, 1972
 Hill, George Watts. Public Service, 1984
 Hill, Robert. Science, 1984
 Hitchings, George. Science, 1980
 Hodges, Luther. Public Service, 1966
 Holshouser Jr., James. Public Service, 2006
 Horton, Frank. Fine Arts, 1999
Hotelling, Harold ^[26]. Science, 1972
 Howell, Claude. Fine Arts, 1985
 Humber, Robert Lee. Public Service, 1968
 Hunt, Betty Debnam. Public Service, 2005
Hunt Jr., James Baxter ^[27]. Public Service, 2003
 Hutchison III, Clyde. Science, 1995
 Ingram, Robert A. Public Service, 2014
 Jackson, Herb. Fine Arts, 1999
 James, A. Everette Jr. Fine Arts, 2015
 Janty, R.K.M. Science, 2017
 Jenrette, Richard. Public Service, 1994
 Johnson, Gerald. Literature, 1965
 Johnson, Hunter. Fine Arts, 1965
 Jones, H. G. Public Service, 2002
 Jones, Mary Ellen. Science, 1991
 Jordan III, Robert. Public Service, 2001
 Kamphoefner, Henry. Fine Arts, 1978
 Kellenberger, May G.L. Public Service, 1969
 Kenan, Frank. Public Service, 1990
 Kenan, Randall. Literature, 2005
 Kenan III, Thomas. Public Service, 1997
 Kirk, Phillip J., Jr. Public Service, 2013
 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
 Nicholson, Freda. Public Service, 1994
 Niven, Penelope. Literature, 2004
 Noland, Kenneth. Fine Arts, 1995
 Odell Jr., A.G. Fine Arts, 1966
Owen, Guy ^[28]. Literature, 1971
 Pagano, Joseph. Science, 1996
 Park, Roy. Public Service, 1989
 Parker, Michael. Literature, 2006
 Parker Jr., Roy. Public Service, 2006
 Parr, Robert. Science, 1999
 Patterson, Jane Smith. Public Service, 2017
 Patton, Frances Gray. Literature, 1970
 Pearson, Henry. Fine Arts, 1970
 Peiser, Mark. Fine Arts, 2009
 Pierce, Ovid. Literature, 1969
Pittman, Hobson ^[29]. Fine Arts, 1968
Poe, Clarence ^[30]. Public Service, 1964
Powell, William ^[31]. Literature, 2000
 Preyer, Emily Harris. Public Service, 1998
 Preyer, L. Richardson. Public Service, 1998
 Price, Reynolds. Literature, 1977
 Proctor, Deborah S. Public Service, 2019
 Ragan, Sam. Fine Arts, 1979
 Rash, Ron. Literature, 2011
 Rice, Oscar. Science, 1966
 Rivera, Jr., Alexander. Fine Arts, 2008
 Roberts, Gene. Public Service, 2018
 Rodbell, Martin. Science, 1998
 Rooke, Leon. Literature, 1990
 Roper, William L. Public Service, 2018
 Rose, Charlie. Public Service, 2007
 Rounds, Glen. Literature, 1981
 Royster, Vermont. Literature, 1968
 Rubin Jr., Louis. Literature, 1992
 Russell, Charles. Literature, 1968
 Sabiston Jr., David. Science, 1978
 Saltzman, Marvin. Fine Arts, 1998
 Sancar, Aziz. Science, 2016
 Sanders, Charles. Science, 2006
 Sanders, John. Public Service, 1996
 Sanford, Terry. Public Service, 1970
 Scherr, Mary Ann. Fine Arts, 2003
 Schmidt-Nielsen, Knut. Science, 1999
 Schopler, Eric. Public Service, 1993
 Scott, Ralph. Public Service, 1981
 Scott, Robert. Public Service, 1996
 Semans, James & Mary. Fine Arts, 1971
 Shapiro, Alan. Literature, 2014
 Shelton, Henry. Public Service, 1999

Cohen, Myron S. Science, 2013
 Coleman, Carolyn Q. Public Service, 2018
 Colvard, Dean. Public Service, 1990
 Cooke, S. Tucker. Fine Arts, 2000
 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 [18]. Literature, 1964
 Fletcher, William. Science, 2000
 Franklin, John Hope. Literature, 1993
Frazier, Charles [19]. 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 [20]. Literature, 1998
 Gilmore, Voit. Public Service, 2004
Golden, Harry [21]. Literature, 1979
 Goodman, James. Public Service, 2000
 Goodnight, Ann. Public Service, 2008
 Gordy, Walter. Science, 1979
 Gottschalk, Carl. Science, 1967
Graham, Billy [22]. Public Service, 1967
 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. 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
 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
 Simpson, Bland. Fine Arts, 2005
 Simpson, Vollis. Fine Arts, 2011
 Sloane, Joseph. Fine Arts, 1977
 Smith, Arthur. Fine Arts, 2001
 Smith, Dean. Public Service, 2008
 Smith, Lee. Literature, 1984
 Smithies, Oliver. Science, 1993
 Spaulding, Elna. Public Service, 1997
Speight, Francis [32]. 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
 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 Jr., Banks. Public Service, 1995
 Taylor, Billy. Fine Arts, 1993
Taylor, James [8]. Fine Arts, 1998
 Thornton, William. Science, 2003
 Thorp, Bo. Fine Arts, 2009
 Thurman, Maxwell. Public Service, 1992
Timberlake, Bob [33]. Fine Arts, 1990
 Tynes, Harriet. Public Service, 1978
 Walker, LeRoy T. Public Service, 2004
Walser, Richard [34]. Literature, 1976
 Wani, Mansukh. Science, 2005
 Ward, Robert. Fine Arts, 1975
Watson, Doc [35]. Fine Arts, 1986
Waynick, Capus [36]. Public Service, 1971
 Weatherford, Carole Boston. Literature, 2010
Webb, James E. [37]. Public Service, 1971
Wellman, Manly Wade [38]. 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, Edwin Graves. Public Service, 2002
 Wilson, Emily Herring. Literature, 2006
Winston, Ellen Black [39]. 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

Graham, Frank Porter [23]. Public Service 1965
Gray, Robert. Fine Arts, 1998

African American Recipients

Angelou, Maya [12]. Literature, 1987
Baker, Etta. Fine Arts, 2003
Barber, William J., II, Rev. Dr. Public Service, 2019
Barrax, Gerald W. Literature, 2009
Bayes, Ronald. Literature, 1989
Bearden, Romare. Fine Arts, 1976
Biggers, John. Fine Arts, 1995
Brown, Robert J. Public Service, 2016
Burke, Selma. Fine Arts, 1982
Chambers, Julius L. Public Service, 2002
Davis, Charles (Chuck). Fine Arts, 1992
Donaldson, Lou. Fine Arts, 2012
Fletcher, William. Science, 2000
Franklin, John Hope. Literature, 1993
Freelon, Philip G. Fine Arts, 2017
Frye, Henry. Public Service, 2007
Green, Jaki Shelton. Literature, 2003
Kenan, Randall. Literature, 2005
Koontz, Elizabeth Duncan. Public Service, 1977
Lee, Howard N. Public Service, 2015
Lucas, John Harding. Public Service, 2013
Lynch, Loretta. Public Service, 2017
Marsalis, Branford. Fine Arts, 2011
Mitchiner, Reginald. Science, 1977
Moore, Lenard D. Literature, 2014
Rivera Jr., Alexander M. Fine Arts, 2008
Taylor, Billy. Fine Arts, 1993
Walker, LeRoy T. Public Service, 2004
Weatherford, Carole Boston. Literature, 2010
Williams, William T. Fine Arts, 2006

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