

ORLANDO, Fla., Sept. 19, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) recognized public health leaders for their dedication and service at this year's ASTHO Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida .

Texas Department of State Health Services Commissioner David Lakey is the 2013 McCormack Award winner. Established in 1950 to honor the late Arthur T. McCormack

, a Kentucky state health official, the McCormack Award is presented each year to a current or former public health official who has served for at least 10 years, been a chief state health official for at least five years, demonstrated excellence, and made a significant contribution to the knowledge and practice of the field. A health official since 2007, Lakey leads one of Texas'

largest agencies with a staff of 11,500 and an annual budget of \$2.5 billion

. He served as ASTHO's president from 2011-2012, where he worked to reduce prematurity and infant mortality throughout the United States

. As part of his work as president, Lakey challenged the states and territories to reduce their premature birth rates by 8 percent by 2014. To date, all 50 states, DC, and Puerto Rico

have taken the Healthy Babies Pledge, and seven states have successfully completed the pledge goal.

The Noble J. Swearingen Award was given to Stephen Ronck, deputy commissioner of community health services at the Oklahoma State Department of Health. Since 1979, the Swearingen Award, named for a former ASTHO executive director, has been bestowed on one individual in public health administration who has five or more years of experience in a state health agency and five or more years in service to the ASTHO Senior Deputies Committee or in some other capacity. Known for his strong leadership, Ronck was instrumental to leading the Oklahoma State Department of Health to become one of the first health agencies in the country to receive accreditation.

The Presidential Meritorious Service Award is given by the ASTHO president to honor a health leader who has made outstanding contributions to ASTHO and state public health. This year, ASTHO President José Montero recognized two ASTHO employees, Chief of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Sharon Moffatt and Senior Director of Family and Community Health Albert Terrillion, for their significant support for his President's Challenge on the Reintegration of Public Health and Healthcare.

ASTHO's Alumni Award is presented to a former chief state health official who has demonstrated his or her continued commitment to public health. This year's Alumni Award winner is Sanne Magnan, who served as Minnesota's commissioner of health from 2008-2011. As health commissioner, Magnan led the implementation of significant pieces of Minnesota's 2008 health reform legislation, as well as the development of Minnesota's Statewide Health Improvement Program to address tobacco use and obesity. Following her role as a state health official, Sanne was reappointed as the president and chief executive officer of the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement (ICSI) in Minnesota, where she has worked to expand ICSI's mission to target the Triple Aim of health reform: improving the health of the population, improving the patient experience, including quality, and improving the affordability of care by decreasing per capita costs.

The National Excellence in Public Health Award was presented to Judith Monroe, deputy director of CDC and director of the CDC Office for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support. In her role, Monroe's efforts focus on establishing a systems approach that supports integration and collaboration among public health professionals and translating science to practice to increase the capacity and performance of public health agencies. Monroe served as the Indiana state health commissioner from 2005-2010.

A new award, the Ed Thompson Lifetime Achievement Award, will be presented to the Thompson family. Created by ASTHO in grateful memory of F.E. "Ed" Thompson, a former Mississippi state health official, the Thompson medal acknowledges the lifetime achievement of a national public health leader whose career marks an important legacy in the advancement of public health for the nation.

ASTHO Honors Public Health Heroes

Written by Australian Business

ASTHO congratulates its award winners for their dedication and service to improving health and wellness.

ASTHO is the national nonprofit organization representing the public health agencies of the United States, the U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia, as well as the more than 100,000 public health professionals these agencies employ. ASTHO members, the chief health officials of these jurisdictions, are dedicated to formulating and influencing sound public health policy and to ensuring excellence in state-based public health practice.

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