



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Alabama Public Health Association honors professionals

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Public Health Association recently recognized persons from across the state who demonstrated exceptional merit during the past year in the field of public health. The following individuals were presented awards at the association's 51st Annual Meeting and Health Education Conference at the Riverview Plaza Hotel in Mobile May 17.

**Gayle Lees Sandlin** of Wetumpka was presented the Dr. Ira L. Myers Award for Excellence in Public Health. Ms. Sandlin began her career in social work with the Alabama Department of Human Resources in 1970. From that time, until she became an employee of the Alabama Department of Public Health in 1988, she was involved with social services in a variety of settings, and has demonstrated outstanding performance in many settings.

Ms. Sandlin has been a major driving force in the development and implementation of the Children's Health Insurance Program for the state. In fact, under her leadership Alabama was the first state in the country to have its state plan approved and the first to enroll children. One support letter states, "This program is recognized as a national model – so much so that this year when the program is up for Congressional Reauthorization, Gayle has been called on to testify before national groups, including congressional hearings."

This award was established to honor Dr. Myers for his accomplishments by recognizing an individual, group or organization who, through excellence in work, has made a significant impact on some aspect of public health in Alabama.

The Dr. D.G. Gill Award, which is intended to honor an individual who has made an exceptional contribution to public health in Alabama, was presented to **Gwendolyn Lipscomb** of Montgomery. This award was the first award established by the association and was so done in 1967 to honor a former State Health Officer, Dr. D.G. Gill.

Ms. Lipscomb began her public health career in 1984 as a public health nurse in Monroe County. Her dedication to the home health patients there "simply became the mantra" for her tenure in public health. Throughout her public health career she has worked to improve health care access and services in the state. Ms. Lipscomb currently serves as the Director of the Office of Minority Health and in that role touches the lives of many people throughout the state.

and nation. “A key strength is her ability to bring the community together through her strong networking ability,” one support letter stated. She has worked tirelessly in securing grants and other opportunities to improve the health of racial and ethnic minorities to eliminate disparities in health programs and indicators. Her good work is documented by the numerous letters of support from community groups, faith-based organizations and other health care professionals.

The Frederick S. Wolf Award was presented to **Kendal Chad Kent** of Escambia County. This award was established in 1982 to recognize an individual who has been active in public health at the local level for more than 10 years; who has demonstrated efficiency, dedication and professionalism in delivery of public health services; and who has provided unselfish community services in areas unrelated to public health.

One letter of support stated, “From day one, his dedication and commitment to the program was obvious. Chad believed in this program and saw the potential public health benefits.” That philosophy has followed every role that he has pursued throughout his public health career. Kent currently serves as the Emergency Preparedness coordinator for Public Health Area 9. In this role he works with medical, civic, emergency and governmental providers and organizations throughout the eight counties of Southwest Alabama. This program is vital to the success of emergency response plans in the area and he has done an outstanding job in bringing various entities to the consensus table.

**David Newman** of Computer Systems Center in Montgomery was presented the Virginia Kendrick Award. This award is given annually to an individual who has provided notable service to the people of Alabama while serving in a supportive position in the field of public health. As the Support Desk Manager Newman received many letters of support with remarks about his “can do” attitude and his constant dedication to not only getting the job done but his spirit of helpfulness and cooperation. A major project for which he was responsible for providing technical support was the Children’s Health Insurance Program with its many needs for specific design and short deadlines. Many adjectives were utilized to describe Newman, such as: patient, gentle as a dove, total commitment, spirit that radiates, self assurance, always there to help, invaluable to the department.

**Sandy Jackson** of Lawrence County was presented the Guy M. Tate Award, an award presented annually to a public health employee, group or agency with 10 years or less in public health for outstanding current or recent service or contribution to public health. Ms. Jackson is an employee of the Lawrence County Health Department. She is an administrative support assistant and works in the clinic programs. Her many letters of support resound with documentation of her performance beyond the job assignment in all that she does in her important role in the department. She always works long hours and volunteers for extra work when the clinic hours go beyond the normal workday. She has been called on many times to help teach employees new systems to help the clinic flow more efficiently and has done so in a spirit of cooperation and willingness. Area leaders have recognized her organizational skills. One letter of support complimented her for her constant willingness to work with new employees and to help them learn the skills needed for their job.

The Alabama Public Health Association also presented **Kassi Michelle Webster** of Tuscaloosa the Ira L. Myers Scholarship to the University of Alabama at Birmingham where she is pursuing a Master of Public Health degree with a concentration in health behavior. Ms. Webster is a magna cum laude graduate of UAB.

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