

Congratulations to the 2023 Governor’s EMS Award Recipients!

By the virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution in the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, there is hereby officially recognized:

The Governor’s EMS Award for Excellence in EMS

William “Bill” Akers, Jr.



William “Bill” Akers, Jr., has dedicated nearly 50 years of service in the Emergency Medical Services field at the local, regional and state level, serving as a clinician, educator and leader.

He has provided continual active service in various clinical capacities and supports the advancement of prehospital care through his work as the director of the Southwest Virginia Paramedic Program.

He has been recognized as an expert and partner in the provision of regional EMS and has worked on numerous statewide projects aimed at improving Virginia’s EMS System. His work has led to the development and improvement of state-level policies that have direct impact on EMS certification and patient care.

Bill Akers’ contributions to Virginia’s local, regional and state EMS system are exceptional and greatly valued by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Governor’s EMS Award for Outstanding Contribution to Leadership in EMS

The Kent J. Weber Trophy

Beverly G. Harris



Beverly “Bev” Harris actively contributes to the advancement of EMS and patient care through her participation in committees and training programs.

Her exceptional abilities to organize, conduct, manage, problem-solve, and evaluate have been demonstrated through her exemplary leadership and administrative skills with the VCU LifeEvac program, where she manages administrative functions and serves as a Flight Paramedic and Flight Nurse.

She works collaboratively with multiple departments to build relationships and provide support, and commitment to staying updated with the latest advancements to ensure her team remains at the forefront of best practices in EMS and air medical transport.

Beverly Harris’ significant contributions to Virginia’s local, regional and state EMS system are exceptional and greatly valued by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Governor's EMS Award for Physician with Outstanding Contribution to EMS

The Frank M. Yeiser Trophy

Benjamin D. Nicholson, M.D.



Dr. Benjamin Nicholson has demonstrated exceptional leadership and dedication in the delivery of prehospital care by going above and beyond his duties to enhance EMS care, education and support of Virginia's EMS System. He began his career as a volunteer EMT in high school before becoming an EMS physician, which reflects his genuine commitment to giving back to the community and making a positive impact. His involvement in various projects and initiatives, including his development of a 3-D printed ventilator during the pandemic and his collaboration with the creation of a physician consult line, shows his dedication to the

enhancement of patient care and emergency medical response. His ability to empathize with providers' experiences, offer support and give valuable feedback has fostered a culture of continuous improvement and learning while positively impacting the EMS System in Virginia.

Dr. Benjamin Nicholson's significant contributions to Virginia's local, regional and state EMS system are exceptional and greatly valued by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Governor's EMS Award for Nurse with Outstanding Contribution to EMS

Matthew J. Jensen, R.N.



As a prehospital flight nurse at VCU Health's Critical Care Transport Network, Matthew Jensen delivers advanced and evidence-based care to patients. He is a tenured frontline clinician and lead preceptor/mentor to new flight paramedics and flight nurses. He has led multiple high-level projects, in addition to teaching stroke, STEMI and trauma classes throughout the region. Matthew is widely recognized as an intellectual resource for the program and industry. His exceptional contributions, dedication to improvement, vast expertise in EMS, ability to navigate complex situations and educational contributions to medical journals demonstrate his

commitment to the EMS field.

Matthew Jensen's significant contributions to Virginia's local, regional and state EMS system are exceptional and greatly valued by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Governor's EMS Award for Outstanding EMS Prehospital Educator Michael Garnett



Since 1995, Michael Garnett has worked as a Nationally Registered Paramedic in Virginia. He is an Education Coordinator and has been involved in EMS education since 2002; previously serving as a Senior Field Coordinator since 2005 and Program Director since 2006 for the Western Virginia EMS Council and their Training Center.

He has been integrally involved in establishing and maintaining his Regional EMS Council's state accredited Advanced-EMT training center, and his expertise in this area of education has gained him notoriety throughout the state by assisting other EMS agencies in their endeavors to become established as an accredited Advanced-EMT training center.

At the state level, Michael is an active Virginia Office of EMS Emergency Operations Instructor for Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) Triage and Medical Incident Command Structure (ICS) management and EMS Officer 1 program instructor. As a local and regional EMS educator, he strives to assist in recognized gaps in agency training and has developed programs and scenario-based education to training.

Michael Garnett's significant contributions to Virginia's local, regional and state EMS system are exceptional and greatly valued by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Governor's EMS Award for Outstanding EMS Prehospital Provider John "Jack" Kelley



Jack Kelley is a life member of Lake of the Woods Fire-Rescue and is an AHA CPR Instructor through Mary Washington Healthcare. He has been so instrumental in the EMS system in Orange County that the Board of Supervisors proclaimed that March was "Jack Kelley Month."

Jack has received countless Squad Member of the Year awards, Captain Choice awards, as well as many other local awards for dedication, performance and lifesaving skills and for being a provider who is dedicated to helping people in need. He continually promotes emergency medical preparedness with visits to schools and community events and was active with the Red E. Fox 911 for Kids Program. He has held every rank in the Department, up to Rescue Chief and is a staple in their EMT programs.

Jack Kelley's significant contributions to Virginia's local, regional and state EMS system are exceptional and greatly valued by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**The Governor’s EMS Award for Outstanding Contribution to EMS Health and Safety
& The Governor’s EMS Award for Outstanding EMS Agency
James City County Fire Department**



James City County Fire Department received two awards in the following categories: Outstanding Contribution to EMS Health and Safety and Outstanding EMS Agency.

James City County Fire Department was established in 1961. It’s located in Virginia’s Historic Triangle and has a long history of mutual aid with York County and the City of Williamsburg. They are a regional leader in prehospital care, community engagement and emergency preparedness. All James City County Firefighters are cross trained in EMS, and every ambulance is staffed around the clock with at least one Advanced Life Support provider. Through a variety of cutting-edge programs and partnerships, James City County Fire Department emphasizes a data-driven, evidence-based approach to prehospital care and quality improvement.

James City County Fire Department places provider and member health and safety as a top priority, which is demonstrated through the extensive safety programs and efforts that have been established, continuously supported and maintained. The team recently started incorporating therapy dogs for in-station visits and during debriefings to promote a sense of calmness and safety to encourage communication.

James City County Fire Department’s significant contributions to Virginia’s local, regional and state EMS system are exceptional and greatly valued by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**The Governor’s EMS Award for Outstanding Contribution to EMS for Children
Jennifer S. Farmer**



Jennifer Farmer is a Registered Nurse with over 20 years of experience. She serves as the Pediatric Champion for Lakeside Volunteer Rescue Squad (LVRS) and is involved in the EMS for Children Committee’s Pediatric Champion Workgroup. She is also a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician.

Jennifer’s dedication to providing comprehensive care for pediatric patients extends throughout the entire continuum of care, from injury prevention to rehabilitation.

Jennifer Farmer’s significant contributions to Virginia’s local, regional and state EMS system are exceptional and greatly valued by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Governor’s EMS Award for Outstanding Contribution to EMS Telecommunication
Amanda Echevarria



Amanda works at the Chesapeake Police Department as a Public Safety Telecommunicator Supervisor with over 14 years of service. She serves as the Medical Dispatch Coordinator and maintains the Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) program and Priority Dispatch ProQA program, as well as administrating all quality assurance on EMD related calls for service. She is directly responsible for improving EMD and creating efficiencies in the critical link between the 911 call and emergency services’ arrival.

Amanda Echevarria’s significant contributions to Virginia’s local, regional and state EMS system are exceptional and greatly valued by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Governor’s EMS Award for Outstanding Contribution to EMS Emergency Preparedness and Response

The James A. Nogle, Jr. Trophy

City of Alexandria Community Emergency Response Team



The City of Alexandria Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) was established in 2003 and they currently have approximately 150 volunteers.

Each year, they offer free CERT Basic Training classes. They also supported Alexandria Health District with COVID testing and vaccination sites and were instrumental in the city’s response to the pandemic.

Additionally, they conducted outreach each year during National Night Out by handing out preparedness materials and answering questions.

The City of Alexandria Community Emergency Response Team’s significant contributions to Virginia’s local, regional and state EMS system are exceptional and greatly valued by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**The Governor’s EMS Award for Innovation Excellence in EMS
Northern Virginia Emergency Response System**



Established in 2013, Northern Virginia Emergency Response System (NVERS) is a multi-discipline, cross-jurisdictional subcommittee focused on the coordination and response elements of high-profile incidents. They serve to maximize the region’s prevention of, response to, and management of atypical incidents, asymmetrical attacks and unconventional events.

Their accomplishments include the publication of the Northern Virginia Joint Action Guide, a deployment of Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) resources within the region, the implementation of standardized warm zone and hot zone best practices, and the instruction of unified command classes to law

enforcement and fire/rescue agencies.

Northern Virginia Emergency Response System’s significant contributions to Virginia’s local, regional and state EMS system are exceptional and greatly valued by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

An additional award is presented in conjunction with the Governor’s EMS Awards, and it recognizes the outstanding contributions to EMS by a high school senior. This is a scholarship award provided by the Virginia Office of EMS in conjunction with the State EMS Advisory Board.

**The Governor’s EMS Award for Outstanding Contribution to EMS by a High School Senior -
The Dr. Carol Gilbert \$5,000 Scholarship
Kelsey Cone**



Kelsey Cone is a member of the Cave Spring Rescue Squad. She was the Valedictorian at Hidden Valley High School and will be attending Virginia Western Community College/Radford Carilion University. She is currently volunteering with her local rescue squad as an EMT and plans to be a career EMT with a local fire department in the coming months. In the fall, she will double major in Nursing and Health Sciences.

Kelsey Cone’s contributions to Virginia’s local, regional and state EMS system are exceptional and greatly valued by the Commonwealth of Virginia.