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Health Care

Introducing the Health Care Champion Awards honorees for 2025



Dr. Valerie Montgomery Rice, president and CEO of Morehouse School of Medicine, is receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award for this year's Health Care Champion Awards.

MOREHOUSE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



By [Allyson Reynolds](#) – Assistant Editor, Atlanta Business Chronicle

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Atlanta Business Chronicle's second annual Health Care Champion Awards recognize the industry's most innovative and influential leaders.

From educators and business founders to doctors and nurses, these health care champions play a vital role in maintaining and improving the health of the community.

President and CEO of Morehouse School of Medicine Dr. Valerie Montgomery Rice is receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award for her career contributions to improvements in health care and health equity.

[Montgomery Rice](#) is highly regarded for her enhancement of women's health care delivery and research. She founded the Center for Women's Health Research at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee – one of the nation's first research centers devoted to understanding why women of color are at greater risk of certain diseases, according to its [website](#).

She is the sixth president – and first female president – of Morehouse School of Medicine.

Montgomery Rice, along with the other award winners, will be honored during a special ceremony from 4-6 p.m. on March 20 at Bishop Station, which is near Atlantic Station. To purchase tickets, visit the [Chronicle's events page](#).

Honorees are chosen through an independent editorial review, with selections based entirely on their merits, achievements and contributions to their

organizations and local community. Commercial interests with the Chronicle are not considered. The Chronicle's editorial team, along with a group of past Health Care Champion honorees, examined the nominations, resulting in the selection of 32 of the most influential health care champions across metro Atlanta.

THIS YEAR'S HEALTH CARE CHAMPION AWARDS WINNERS ARE:

Lifetime Achievement

Dr. Valerie Montgomery Rice, president and CEO at Morehouse School of Medicine

Health Care Executives of the Year

Eric Lisle, CEO of Southeast Primary Care Partners

Dr. Joon Lee, CEO of Emory Healthcare

Kevin Brown, president and CEO of Piedmont Healthcare

Health Equity Leaders of the Year

Dr. Gulshan Harjee, co-founder, and Jeremy Cole, executive director, of Mosaic Health Center

Dr. Frank Jones, founder of My Black Doctor Directory

Maria Toler, founding partner of SteelSky Ventures

Community Outreach Champions of the Year

Dr. Monica Parker, director of outreach, recruitment and engagement at Emory Goizueta Brain Health Institute

Mercy Care Street Medicine Team

Innovator of the Year - Men's Health

Dr. Leanne Burnham, assistant professor and co-director of Prostate Cancer Precision Prevention Program (PCP3) at Morehouse School of Medicine

Innovators of the Year - Pediatric Health

Dr. Steven Leichter, founder of Endocrine Consultants (now known as Piedmont Physicians Endocrinology, Piedmont Healthcare)

Dr. Katharine Brock, medical program director of the supportive care clinic at Aflac Cancer and Blood Disorders Center at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Innovators of the Year - Research

Russell Jeter, assistant professor of mathematics at the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at [Georgia State University](#)

Dr. Gustavo Pradilla, chief of neurosurgery at Grady Memorial Hospital

Dr. Wilbur Lam, vice provost for entrepreneurship at [Emory University](#)

Innovators of the Year - Senior Health

Fayron Epps, founder at Alter Dementia

Dr. Ugochi Ohuabunwa, chief of geriatrics at Grady Memorial Hospital

Improving Through Improv, developed by Amanda Lee Williams in partnership with Dr. Candace Kemp, professor at The Gerontology Institute at Georgia State University

Innovators of the Year – Women's Health

Amanda K. Gilmore, associate professor and director of the National Center for Sexual Violence Prevention at the School of Public Health, Georgia State University

Dr. Ragsbert Phillips-Reed, founder and CEO of Sisters By Choice Inc.

Public Health Care Champions of the Year

Dr. Sandra Valenciano, district health director and CEO of DeKalb Public Health

Dr. Lauren Middlebrooks Fasusi, pediatric emergency medicine physician at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Nurses of the Year

Lindsay Chapman, flight nurse at Air Evac Lifestream

Shoghig Andakian, nurse professional development specialist for perinatal services at Wellstar Health System

Rising Stars

Dr. Nikky Shotwell, founder of Kids Dental Studio

Melanie Williams-Johnson, physician assistant of Greater Atlanta
Women's Healthcare

Dr. Charis Chambers Davidson, OB/GYN and founder of The Period Doctor

Rural Health Care Champions of the Year

Jodie Guest, senior vice chair of the department of epidemiology at Rollins
School of Public Health at Emory University

Dr. Michael Carr, project director and principal investigator at Emory Rural
Tele-EMS Network (ER-TEMS)

Allied Health Professionals of the Year

Monique Knight, CEO of Comprehensive Family Care

Nashifa Momin, pediatric speech language pathologist at Children's Healthcare
of Atlanta

Sherrill Rucker-Peoples, certified therapeutic recreation specialist at Emory
Rehabilitation Hospital