



American Academy of Nursing Announces Two New Honors to Commemorate the Organization's 50th Anniversary Year

The Inaugural Mary Elizabeth Carnegie Leadership in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Award and the Gold Award will be Presented during the Academy's Health Policy Conference in October

Washington, DC (September 12, 2023) – The American Academy of Nursing (Academy), in its golden anniversary year, has established two new awards, the **Gold Award** and the **Mary Elizabeth Carnegie Leadership in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Award**. These awards reflect the Academy's mission to improve health and achieve health equity by impacting policy through nursing leadership, innovation, and science. The **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)** will be presented with the Gold Award and **Bernardine M. Lacey, EdD, RN, FAAN**, will be honored posthumously with the Mary Elizabeth Carnegie Leadership in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Award during the [2023 Health Policy Conference, Celebrating 50 Years of Leadership, Policy, and Partnerships](#), being held October 5 - 7, 2023 in Washington, DC.

This year, the Academy is celebrating its 50th year of impacting policy through leadership and partnerships. To mark this momentous occasion, the Academy is recognizing the importance of its partners that have collaborated with our organization over the decades to advance health and health care. Awarded only in this commemorative year, the Academy's Board of Directors, in conjunction with its 50th Anniversary Committee developed the honor to celebrate this significant milestone. The **Gold Award** pays tribute to the partnerships necessary to advance impact and is being bestowed to an organizational partner that has demonstrated strong success in joining with the Academy to advance health, raise the impact of the profession, and champion health equity.

"The American Academy of Nursing is thrilled to recognize the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as an instrumental partner through the inaugural Gold Award presentation," said Academy President Kenneth R. White, PhD, RN, AGACNP, ACHPN, FACHE, FAAN. "Our success has not been achieved in isolation, we have benefited from our relationships with engaged partners such as RWJF who have championed nursing and are paramount to amplifying the Academy's health policy impact."

"We are honored to be recognized with the Gold Award," said Michelle Larkin, Vice President of Program Management for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation - and a nurse. "The American Academy of Nursing has long been a key partner in supporting the well-being and development of a nursing workforce prepared for the challenges of the 21st century and beyond."

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is committed to improving health and health equity in the United States. In partnership with others, the Foundation is working to develop a Culture of Health rooted in equity that provides every individual with a fair and just opportunity to thrive, no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they have. RWJF recognizes the power of nurses in health care and policy, and has invested in the Academy, as well as the nursing profession, in transformative ways. The Academy's vision of healthy lives for all people aligns with the mission of RWJF and a Culture of Health, and our organizations have had the opportunity to partner on initiatives that advance these goals.

RWJF has been integral to the Academy's work and programming through its multi-year grant for the Institute for Nursing Leadership's (INL) signature event, the 2020 Critical Conversation on Racism and Health Equity, and the COVID-19 Courage Awards. The Academy supports the work of the Future of

Nursing initiative and draws upon recommendations from the initial 2010 report and the 2020-2030 report in its policy work. In 2007, RWJF funded a Raise the Voice campaign with the Academy to showcase how nurses are transforming the health care system. This campaign led to the development of the Academy's Edge Runners initiative, which recognizes nurse-led and nurse-designed models that improve clinical, economic, and community outcomes.

Throughout the years, many Academy Fellows have participated in RWJF's programs such as the Health Policy Fellows, Nurse Faculty Scholars, the former Nurse Executive Fellowship, and others, which have afforded opportunities to advance leadership and policy impact. Moreover, RWJF has sustained its commitment to nursing and served as an invaluable partner in addressing antiracism in nursing, eliminating health inequities, as well as a wide array of research to improve health care delivery.



The Academy looks forward to honoring the remarkable legacy of **Bernardine M. Lacey**, EdD, RN, FAAN, posthumously, as the inaugural recipient of the **Mary Elizabeth Carnegie Leadership in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Award**. Dr. Lacey, a trailblazing leader, advocate, researcher, and educator is being recognized for her 60-year career to fight racism and injustice within the health care system. Dr. Lacey served in numerous leadership roles, including her advancement from staff nurse to administrative supervisor at Howard University/Freedman's Hospital in the 1960s, Founding Director of the Western Michigan University Bronson School of Nursing, Executive Director of Children's

National Medical Center School Health Program in the early 2000s, and Chairperson of the Department of Nursing at Bowie State. Her many accomplishments include serving on President Bill Clinton's Task Force on Health Care Reform and the Clinton/Gore Transition Team Task Force on Health Care Delivery and developing and directing a nurse-managed respite center for homeless men, which was funded through a \$1.4 million grant she secured from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Dr. Lacey was sought out for her unique perspective, which was rooted in compassion and understanding. She was inducted into the Academy in 1990 and named a Living Legend in 2014. Dr. Lacey passed away in March 2021.

"It is a distinct honor for me to have the opportunity to shine a light on Dr. Lacey's illustrious career, which spanned practice and education, but most importantly to showcase her enduring focus of lifting others up," said Academy President Kenneth R. White. "As a fierce champion of equity, diversity, and inclusivity, she advocated for the inclusion of under-represented communities, including expanding opportunities for the treatment of homeless men in Washington, DC through the Federal City Shelter and advocating for inclusivity of under-served communities in nursing education curriculum at Howard University. Her persistence in the face of discrimination and challenges, as well as her steadfast commitment and advocacy continues to inspire."

"My grandmother, Dr. Bernardine M. Lacey or Nana, as we all affectionately called her, was a huge supporter of education. She believed that through education, one could achieve anything, and it was truly the pathway to success," said Sean Mays, Dr. Lacey's grandson. "So many times, while pursuing my undergraduate degree at Howard University, Nana would call me and ask, 'Are you getting your lesson?' This constant reminder was her way of reiterating the importance of education to ensure that it remained my top priority."

The Mary Elizabeth Carnegie Leadership in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Award was established by the Academy Board of Directors this year in conjunction with the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Committee to recognize a Fellow whose significant and sustained contributions have advanced the organization's core values of equity, diversity, and inclusivity in nursing and health care. Dr. Lacey truly embodied these values and her career was marked by her willingness to share her experiences facing

racism and discrimination, which has not only supported other Black nurses, but also allowed for the profession to examine its own systemic racism and chart a more inclusive, equitable path forward. Her impact has forever changed nursing and will continue to guide the profession towards comprehensive reform.

This award is named after Mary Elizabeth Carnegie, DPA, RN, FAAN, who was a pioneering and tireless leader in the promotion of equity, diversity, and inclusivity within the nursing profession. As a mentor, educator, and advocate for African American nurses and communities of color, Dr. Carnegie was instrumental in breaking down racial barriers. Notably, Dr. Carnegie was the first Black nurse to serve on the Florida State Nurses Association Board of Directors in 1948; initiated the first baccalaureate nursing program in Virginia at Hampton Institute (now Hampton University, one of five HBCUs in Virginia); and authored the groundbreaking work *The Path We Tread: Blacks in Nursing Worldwide, 1854-1994*, a key resource to examining Black nurses' contributions to the nursing field and their struggles to be recognized. Her profound impact and sustained commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusivity in nursing is indisputable. Dr. Carnegie served as the sixth President of the Academy from 1978-1979 and was honored as an inaugural Living Legend in 1994. Dr. Carnegie's namesake award will be granted annually at the Academy's Health Policy Conference.



[Learn more](#) about the Academy and [visit the policy conference website](#) for more details, including information regarding the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Welcome Event that will be held on the first day of the conference through the generous support provided by RWJF.

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About the American Academy of Nursing

[The American Academy of Nursing](#) serves the public by advancing health policy and practice through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge. Academy Fellows are inducted into the organization for their extraordinary contributions to improve health locally and globally. With more than 2,900 Fellows, the Academy represents nursing's most accomplished leaders in policy, research, administration, practice, and academia.

Contact:

Caroline Kane | 202-777-1173 | ckane@AANnet.org