

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Nurse’s Touch Award Exemplifies the Best of the Best**

*Outstanding nurse educators are honored for advancing those special qualities that make nurses the most trusted profession in the United States.*

Leawood, Kan., March 11, 2024 – In mid-January, [Gallup announced](#) that – for the 22<sup>nd</sup> consecutive year – Americans’ ratings of the honesty and ethical standards of 23 occupations put nurses at the top.

“Nurses remain the most trusted profession, with 78% of U.S. adults currently believing nurses have high honesty and ethical standards,” the report noted.

The No. 1 ranking is no surprise to those who work in healthcare. After all, the nursing profession’s members set a high bar for themselves in a field that becomes more complex every day. While Florence Nightingale had to battle a bumbling bureaucracy, and Clara Barton famously dodged bullets, today’s nurses face challenges unique to the modern world. They are, in fact, the linchpin of a high-tech healthcare system that asks them to simultaneously act as skilled-care providers, information sharers, wellness educators, and quality-control experts.

Helping nurses develop skills for such multivariate roles are nurse educators, the professors in nursing programs at colleges and universities. And, each year, the most highly skilled of these individuals are honored with the prestigious, nationally recognized Nurse’s Touch Award from ATI Nursing Education (Leawood, Kan.).

For 2024, the award recipients are:

- Daihnia Dunkley, PhD, RN, Yale School of Nursing (Orange, Conn.)
- David Everhart, RN, MSN, CEN, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute Nursing Program (Hudson, N.C.)
- Sandra Gilpin PhD, RN, CNE, CDP, FNGNA, Purdue University (West Lafayette, Ind.)
- Brenda D. Zenger, MSNeD, RN, Concordia St. Paul (Portland)

### **The best of the best nurse educators**

The special individuals who are named as Nurse’s Touch Award honorees not only must excel at teaching students the technical knowledge and skills required to be safe and competent, but they also must set the example for students. The best among them seem to naturally model the special qualities that make nurses so memorable – and, per the Gallup poll, trustworthy.

These individuals, in other words, have “The Nurse’s Touch.”

### **Choosing the honorees**

Four qualities are essential to having this special “touch” and being invited into this elite echelon of nurse educators:

1. Professional communication
2. Wellness/self-care
3. Knowledge of nursing informatics/technology
4. Leadership/management.

Each fall, peers and managers within the nursing profession nominate individuals who exemplify these qualities. A rigorous review and scoring process whittles the nominees to a handful representing four regions of the United States. One is then chosen from each region as its honoree.

### **The rewards of being winners**

In honor of their achievement, each of this year’s winners will receive complimentary registration, hotel lodging, and airfare to attend the 2024 National Nurse Educator Summit in Salt Lake City. The group of winners will be honored in a special awards ceremony at the event. (The Summit is a professional-development conference featuring and attended by hundreds of nurse educators from across the country.)

To read more about the Nurse’s Touch Award, please visit [www.atitesting.com/educator/solutions/nurses-touch/award](http://www.atitesting.com/educator/solutions/nurses-touch/award).

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### **About ATI Nursing Education**

ATI helps create competent, practice-ready nurses who are dedicated to maintaining public safety and ensuring the future of healthcare. As the leading provider of online learning programs for nursing, we support and help educate future nurses from admissions, throughout undergraduate and graduate nursing school, and via continuing education over the course of their careers. Our company began in 1998 with the aid of a nurse, and our team of doctorate- and master’s-prepared nurse educators continue to lead the development of our psychometrically designed and data-driven solutions. These solutions improve faculty effectiveness, fuel student progress, and advance program outcomes in three distinct areas: assessing performance, remediating problem areas, and predicting future student and program success. For nursing school administrators and nurse educators, ATI is the trusted advisor that consistently drives nursing success.

To learn more about ATI, visit [www.atitesting.com](http://www.atitesting.com).

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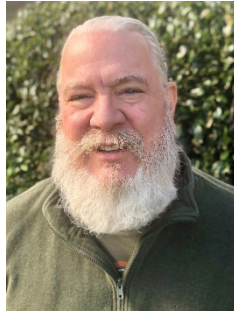
**Daihnia Dunkley, PhD, RN**  
**Yale School of Nursing (Orange, Conn.)**

Dr. Dunkley – originally from Jamaica – has resided in New York since the early 1990s. In the span of her 20+ year nursing career, which began as a licensed practical nurse and subsequently as a registered nurse after earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Hampton University, Dr. Dunkley worked extensively in the arena of obstetrical health. Early in her career, Dr. Dunkley became aware of the inequities within the healthcare system and their impact on patients and practitioners, especially people of color. After spending her formative years in nursing, learning to understand these complex problems and making the transition from the bedside to leadership roles and academia, she shifted her focus toward serving as a change agent by advocating for systematic improvement in matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the nursing profession, and eradicating racial health disparities.

Dr. Dunkley earned her Master's and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from the University of Phoenix. She is currently serving as a Senior Lecturer in the Graduate Entry Pre-Specialty in Nursing (GEPN) and Master of Science in Nursing programs at Yale School of Nursing. Her dissertation research focused on the experiences of Black female executive nurse leaders and created the inspiration for founding The League of Extraordinary Black Nurses, a nonprofit organization aimed at supporting current and future Black nurses through the guiding principles of leadership, mentorship, and scholarship.

Additionally, through her company, Daihnia's Joy, Dr. Dunkley serves as a consultant, applying strategy to passion in her efforts to diversify nursing representation, empower minority nurse leaders, and improve Black birthing outcomes. She actively provides nursing career-development services through coaching and various other methods, such as her signature curriculum, "The Seacole Effect," and creates educational materials for expectant families, including "Conversations with Dr. D," a video podcast series, and *Living for Two*, a pregnancy and childbirth self-advocacy e-book.

Dr. Dunkley is a well-respected and sought-after speaker and published scholar whose work and reputation have attracted invitations to international and domestic events, including the University of Oxford Women's Leadership Symposium in London and an appearance on the BET network documentary, "High Risk." In 2022, Dr. Dunkley was celebrated by her beloved alma mater, Hampton University, as an inductee of the Top 40 Under 40 Alumni Society.



**David Everhart, RN, MSN, CEN**  
**Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute Nursing Program (Hudson, N.C.)**

David Everhart, RN, MSN, CEN, was graduated from the University of South Alabama with his Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree in 1998, later working in ER/trauma. In 2000, he completed his Board Certification in Emergency Nursing, later graduating in 2008 from the University of Colorado with his master's degree in nursing focused on nursing informatics. Serving as an active duty U.S. Navy Nurse Corps Officer from 1998 to 2011, he retired as a Lieutenant Commander with 26 years of combined enlisted and commissioned service. During that time, he was deployed to Iraq in 2003 with Fleet Hospital Three, the first Expeditionary Medical Facility (EMF) in a combat theater.

After his military retirement, he served in positions at Atrium Health in the emergency department, critical care, and hospital leadership. That experience led him to join the Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute Nursing Program Faculty (Hudson, N.C.) as the LPN-RN Lead Instructor in 2021.

Everhart said that being honored as a Nurse's Touch Award honoree is meaningful to him because it stems from his faculty mentors. "Leveraging ATI in every aspect of the student journey was a goal I set for myself when I joined the faculty. Using ATI as our primary resource has allowed us to get outside the traditional teaching box," he added. "Implementing the changes to the program and having the changes intersect with the Next Generation NCLEX has been an awesome project to be a part of."

Everhart said that, as faculty of a very student-centric program, ATI has been the center of his program's success. "Being afforded the opportunity to attend the Summit will absolutely further enhance my ability to develop and deliver the student-centric learning that the next generation of nurses demand."



**Sandra Gilpin PhD, RN, CNE, CDP, FNGNA  
Purdue University (West Lafayette, Ind.)**

Dr. Gilpin has been a nurse for 42 years. Driven by her passion for older adults, much of her bedside experience is in long-term care. Over the years, Dr. Gilpin wore many hats in LTC, ranging from floor nurse to administrator and corporate educator. Her desire to teach focused on increasing the knowledge of LPNs and CNAs working in the long-term care environment. Dr. Gilpin has taught in CNA, LPN, and BSN programs. She is currently a Clinical Assistant Professor and Assistant Head for Undergraduate Programs at Purdue University's main campus in West Lafayette, Ind. Her desire to work with older adults also led to her strong involvement with the Alzheimer's Association across three states and as a Community Educator for the Alzheimer's Association.

Dr. Gilpin has worked for the State of Texas as a Medicare/Medicaid surveyor and was a long-term care ombudsman. She remains committed to the improvement of care for our most vulnerable clients. Dr. Gilpin was inducted as a fellow in the National Gerontological Nursing Association in 2016 and currently holds certifications as a Certified Nurse Educator and Certified Dementia Practitioner.

Dr. Gilpin said that receiving the Nurse's Touch Award was an incredibly humbling experience. "It validates the dedication, passion, and commitment I've invested in shaping the next generation of nurses. This recognition not only celebrates my individual achievements but also acknowledges the collective effort of mentors, colleagues, and students who have inspired me along the way."

Dr. Gilpin added that receiving the award serves as a testament to her unwavering pursuit of excellence in preparing future healthcare professionals to make a meaningful difference in the lives of patients and communities.

"As I reflect on this honor, I also look forward to retiring in May and embarking on the next chapter of my life. While bidding farewell to this fulfilling career is bittersweet," she said, "I am filled with excitement for the new adventures and opportunities that await me."



**Brenda D. Zenger, MSNeD, RN  
Concordia St. Paul (Portland)**

Prof. Zenger's education began at Salt Lake Community College (Salt Lake City, Utah), where she earned her LPN. Later, she earned her associate degree at Portland Community College, her bachelor's degree in nursing at Linfield College (Portland), and her Master's Degree in Nursing Education at the University of Phoenix.

Her education led to a varied career that included positions in long-term care/skilled nursing, medical/ surgical/GI specialties at Oregon Health and Sciences University (Portland), and adult medical/surgical hematology/oncology at BMT-Oregon Health and Sciences University (Portland).

Prof. Zenger's career in academia began as a Clinical Instructor focused on skilled nursing care and medical/surgical. Today, she serves as the Affiliate Faculty Lab Lead in Health Promotion & Assessment and Pharmacology at Concordia St. Paul, Global ABSN Track (Portland). Dr. Zenger said she is deeply honored to receive the Nurse's Touch Award. "It feels so intrinsically rewarding to be recognized for something I derive so much joy from," she explained.

"I am incredibly humbled to receive an award for simply performing my job – a job I love! It is a privilege to be present when a student experiences that 'Ah ha!' moment within themselves as they develop their confidence and competence as a student nurse.

"In our transition to competency-based education, I plan to continue expanding creative avenues enabling students to critically think beyond," she added. "I hope to learn and bring many new and innovative ideas to our curriculum committee from attendance at the ATI Summit."