

Congratulations to the 1998 Triumph Award Winners

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Once again AHIMA members had the opportunity to recognize their colleagues for achievements in and contributions to the health information management (HIM) profession. And, thanks to the continued generous support of Lanier Worldwide, Inc., AHIMA is proud to recognize the following special individuals who have made a difference in the HIM profession. The Awards Committee, elected by the membership at large, has selected these recipients from nominations received from the membership. The winners received their awards at AHIMA's 1998 National Convention and Exhibit in New Orleans in October. Join us as we salute these outstanding individuals. Their accomplishments and commitment to the HIM profession are an inspiration to us all.

Distinguished Member Award

Shirley A. Eichenwald, MBA, RRA

AHIMA honors Shirley Eichenwald with the 1998 Distinguished Member Award. For the past 31 years, Eichenwald has dedicated her talents and expertise to the HIM profession and has served AHIMA in nearly every major capacity. She is a respected leader, a passionate spokesperson for the profession, and a trailblazer.

Her dedication to AHIMA's work at the regional, state, and national levels demonstrates the ultimate in professional leadership. She inspires and brings out the best in her colleagues and minimizes her own role in their accomplishments. As an educator and a consultant, Eichenwald continually influences and mentors new and experienced HIM professionals by challenging and encouraging them in her uniquely gentle way.

Her peers agree that she is a positive role model for the HIM profession. She gives unselfishly to each role she assumes, imparting thoughtful leadership, wisdom, diplomacy, humor, and organizational skill. Shirley Eichenwald embodies the true spirit of professionalism.

Champion Award

Carlton M. Cottrell

For long-term and enthusiastic support of AHIMA and its members, Carlton M. Cottrell, president of Cascade Health Information Software, receives the Champion Award.

For the past 20 years, Cottrell has supported AHIMA in many roles. He also is a visionary who possesses an exciting view of the future and the diverse roles HIM professionals will play. His excitement for the profession also carries over in his role as a teacher, both for the Association and in HIM programs. And in his business, he has recognized the need to develop products from the data that is collected by HIM professionals.

Cottrell is also an advisor, showing how to get the decision makers to take note of the HIM professional's talents and the critical role health information managers play in healthcare. He studies and understands the needs of members and determines what tools are needed to adjust to the latest government regulations and industry trends.

Supporting the HIM profession with his personal enthusiasm, countless hours of service, visionary concepts, solid guidance, and innovative software products has made Carlton Cottrell a true champion of the industry.

Champion Award

Margaret (Peg) A. Schmidt, RRA

In recognition of tireless work to support the HIM profession by advancing AHIMA's leadership position, Margaret (Peg) Schmidt receives the Champion Award.

Schmidt, a member and team leader of the Wisconsin Health Information Management Association (WHIMA), has worked to advance legislative initiatives that promote both the interests of the HIM profession and the rights of patients. She was also an integral part of a team that updated the WHIMA's legal resource manual, providing members with an in-depth reference guide for a multitude of legal situations.

Schmidt has a reputation as a team player who works behind the scenes to get things accomplished. To keep WHIMA members informed on key Senate bills, she served on the Legislative Action Team to develop and maintain an e-mail and fax network. She also instituted a successful telephone campaign to keep state representatives informed of WHIMA's position on legislation. Further, Schmidt testified before the Senate endorsing an educational campaign for the public regarding the release of healthcare records.

Her professionalism and passion for the profession is always evident, whether at a board meeting or on the Senate floor. Peg Schmidt has been a singular champion for her Association and for the profession.

Volunteer Award

Jean S. Clark, RRA

AHIMA presents the Volunteer Award for outstanding commitment, unwavering support, and tireless devotion in volunteering her time to national, state, local, and international health information management associations to Jean Clark.

For the past 25 years, Clark has devoted her time and energy to promoting and serving AHIMA and its members. As the current chair of the Organizational Structure Task Force, she has provided valuable leadership and vital support to the tremendous task of envisioning how the Association can best meet the varied needs of all members. She has served as president of AHIMA and as a member of the Board of Directors. She has also chaired the Professional Practice Council, represented AHIMA on the Board of the International Federation of Health Record Organizations, served as AHIMA's representative to the hospital technical advisory committee of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, chaired the Ambulatory Care Section of AHIMA, served as the president of the South Carolina Health Information Management Association, was a member of the Advisory Committee on Quality Assurance/Utilization Review at the American Hospital Association, and provided her expertise on the Accreditation and Advisory Committee of the Health Information Administration Program, College of Health Related Professions, Medical University of South Carolina.

Clark's devotion to the profession is infectious. Her self-motivation, vision, and willingness to donate her time and energy make Jean Clark an HIM leader and a shining example of the volunteer spirit.

Discovery Award

Lorraine M. Fernandes, ART

Lorraine Fernandes receives the Discovery Award for professional knowledge development through strategic thinking and preparation for changes within health information management.

As vice president of Integrated Clinical Data, Concord, CA, Fernandes's desire to define and develop the future of master patient indexes across the nation has made her a valuable asset to AHIMA. As chair of the MPI Task Force, she has pioneered the development of resolutions and position statements regarding master patient indices and unique healthcare identifiers.

Her unique ability to coordinate her professional and volunteer roles while sharing her knowledge with peers is evident at the local, state, and national levels. She has served as president of the California Health Information Association and has given numerous presentations supporting the health information manager's role in forwarding data quality and Vision 2006. In addition to her professionalism, Fernandes balances her approach to all tasks with humor, enthusiasm, and a positive focus as she cultivates a progressive work environment that is willing to face change.

Legacy Award

Patrice L. Spath, ART

A significant contribution to the knowledge base of the HIM field through articles, chapters, books, and presentations has earned Patrice Spath the Legacy Award.

Spath devotes most of her time to educating HIM professionals and others in quality and resource management techniques. Over the years, she has written and edited many publications that tackle cutting-edge issues in HIM--quality management, utilization management, quality improvement, and others. In addition to these publications, she has dedicated her skills to the production of practical training manuals and a training video, and she is a regular or guest columnist for several publications.

Patrice Spath continues to demonstrate her exceptional skills and dedication to the profession as recipient of the 1998 Legacy Award.

Visionary Award

Vera Rulon, ART, CCS

AHIMA presents the Visionary Award, for groundbreaking work that will help lead the HIM field into the next century, to Vera Rulon.

By carving new paths for the HIM professional, Rulon is leading the way toward fulfilling Vision 2006 initiatives. As manager of clinical informatics and case mix/classification systems for Oxford Health Plans, Norwalk, CT, her job description goes beyond the traditional role of the HIM professional.

She has been a catalyst in bringing about changes to how data and services are evaluated in the managed care arena. Through her work with the computer-based patient record and various coding systems, she has designed programs that measure and risk-adjust the performance of providers, created a data integrity function that evaluated the use of inappropriate codes to improve the accuracy and quality of data, and created a clinical audit function to evaluate the quality of services being provided. Rulon has successfully demonstrated the value of having an HIM professional in the managed care setting.

She has also represented national organizations by writing articles and presenting programs on various classification systems and alternative job opportunities for HIM professionals. Her efforts encourage others to take a fresh look at ways to utilize and develop their skills. She has made many recommendations for systems and users that will change the way healthcare is monitored and reimbursed. An advocate for emerging HIM roles such as data quality manager, clinical data specialist, and data resource administrator, Vera Rulon is indeed an HIM visionary.

Educator Award

Cheryl L. Berthelsen, PhD, RRA

The Educator Award honors those who demonstrate excellence in preparing the next generation of professionals for their HIM careers. This year's recipient, Cheryl L. Berthelsen, has proven worthy of this distinction by continually challenging her students, sharing her knowledge through educational programs and articles, and developing instructional tools and methods.

Berthelsen is an associate professor at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, MS, where she serves on the faculty in the HIM department of the School of Health Related Professions and is a member of the graduate faculty in the Clinical Health Sciences program. What sets her apart is her ability to design creative course projects, which ultimately make her students exceptional. Berthelsen's students note her ability to make conceptually difficult material understandable and applicable in the real world. She is a teacher who truly cares and wants to see her students succeed--in the classroom and beyond. AHIMA thanks Cheryl Berthelsen for her creative teaching methods, her high standards of excellence, and her tireless commitment to students.

Motivator Award

Joyce M. Matheson, ART

For commitment, expertise, and excellence in clinical supervision, Joyce Matheson receives the Motivator Award. Matheson serves on the advisory board for the HIM program at Burlington County College, Pemberton, NJ, where she is also an adjunct professor. She is also the HIM Technology Club advisor and assists with all functions of the club. To help students in their job searches, she developed a workshop for resume writing and interview preparation. In addition to her work with college students, she also assists high school students with a Student-To-Work program to help them develop clerical skills for future employment. Matheson also encourages students to take an active role in the New Jersey Health Information Management Association (NJHIMA) early in their careers--which benefits both NJHIMA and the students. Regardless of how busy she may be, Matheson always makes time to answer questions and provide academic guidance. Because of her high expectations for her students, and for herself, her students are well prepared to enter the job force. Earning the respect and admiration of all who come in contact with her and successfully preparing individuals for the HIM profession has made Joyce Matheson the right choice for this award.

Mentor Award**Marion K. Gentul, RRA, CCS**

AHIMA presents Marion Gentul with the Mentor Award for outstanding professionalism, exceptional leadership, unwavering encouragement, tireless dedication, and unparalleled guidance of health information management professionals.

For the past 15 years, Gentul has been a tireless mentor of new HIM professionals. She has given numerous presentations to HIM students while encouraging them to become involved in their profession and Association. She has provided guidance for many students who have gone on to become leaders of committees and their state associations. Her involvement in teaching and volunteerism is widespread--contributing her expertise to the New Jersey SHAPER program, AHIMA's Team Talks and House of Delegates, and the Society for Clinical Coding. She is also a past president of the New Jersey Health Information Management Association and a recipient of the New Jersey Distinguished Member Award.

By energizing and encouraging those around her to be as successful in their professional lives as she has been in hers, Gentul has consistently demonstrated enthusiasm for her profession. Dedication to HIM and a desire to advance the profession have made Marion Gentul an inspiration to all.

Achievement Award**Chris R. Elliott, MS, RRA**

Chris Elliott receives the Achievement Award for creativity, innovation, forward thinking, and leadership in moving HIM toward fulfilling Vision 2006 initiatives.

Elliott is dedicated to developing HIM professionals throughout the western United States and to moving HIM education nationwide toward Vision 2006 goals. As the coordinator of the HIM and HIT programs at Weber State University, Elliott designed a successful curriculum that he shared with AHIMA's Model Curriculum Task Force. His activities at Weber State University have included serving on the University's Curriculum Committee, working on a general education computer competency task force, and leading development and coordinating installation of a clinical information system for the College of Health Professions. Elliott's endless pursuit of excellence has lead him to enroll in the University of Utah's Doctorate of Medical Informatics Program.

As a visible leader at state and national levels, Chris Elliott is a prime example of someone who is committed to excellence in the profession.

CPR Breakthrough Award**Cindy Zak, MS, RRA**

The CPR Breakthrough Award, for commitment, dedication, and perseverance in achieving enhanced information integration, access, security, and computerization of patient records, goes to Cindy Zak.

Zak has made a significant contribution to advancing the state of the art in computer-based patient records through her work in information security. Her efforts to implement measures to protect the confidentiality and integrity of patient records at Hartford Hospital, Hartford, CT, and communicate to other health information managers the importance, urgency, and approaches for protecting information have gone a long way to better patient privacy and improve quality of care.

In addition to her successes in implementing an information security program, Zak has served on AHIMA's Delphi Task Force on information security, published articles, testified before a Congressional subcommittee on behalf of AHIMA, and given presentations at state and national meetings. She has encouraged and motivated other HIM professionals to take an active role in information security programs and has shown them how to make these programs successful. Cindy Zak's willingness to confront the vast challenges posed by information security have made her a vital asset to the field.

Rising Star Award

Starla Stavely, RRA

Starla Stavely receives the Rising Star Award recognizing a promising new HIM professional. Stavely is a 1994 graduate of the HIM program at the University of Mississippi Medical Center's School of Health Related Professions. Within two years of graduation, she moved from the assistant director position to the director of medical records at Baptist Health Systems in Jackson, MS.

Her willingness to challenge traditional approaches to the health information management field and take calculated risks to get the job done makes her worthy of this award. By implementing self-directed work teams and reengineering her department, she has made vast improvements in her work environment in a short period of time. Significant cost savings and increased customer satisfaction have resulted from her efforts. Stavely also developed a documentation compliance program which was a runner-up for the 1998 David Thompson National Coding Management Award.

An active volunteer, she co-edited the Mississippi Health Information Management Association (MSHIMA) Journal in 1995, chaired the Legislative Committee in 1996, chaired the Program Committee in 1997, and was named Jackson/Vicksburg Council Director in 1998. At work, she has served and led numerous project teams and task forces and serves as a clinical instructor for the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Louisiana Tech University, and Eastern Kentucky University.

By accomplishing so much in a brief career, Starla Stavely has demonstrated that she truly is a rising star.

New Frontier Award

Brenda J. Nesmith

AHIMA presents the New Frontier Award to Brenda J. Nesmith. Recognizing the best of the new talent being trained in HIM, this award is given to a gifted student who embodies the future of the profession.

After raising her children, Nesmith decided to pursue a career of her own. She chose the Health Care Information (HCI) Program at Wallace State Community College in Hanceville, AL. An instant success, she was immediately elected president of the HCI Club. She quickly displayed the qualities of a fine leader by coordinating several successful club activities. Further, Nesmith has been recognized for her achievements with an Adcock Award for clinical practice competence, leadership ability, community service, and HCI Club participation. She also received the Outstanding Academic Achievement Award for maintaining a 4.0 grade point average.

Nesmith has many qualities that are valued in the HIM profession. She is a leader who possesses exceptional critical thinking skills and the dedication and determination needed to succeed in HIM. As we move toward fulfilling the goals of Vision 2006, Brenda Nesmith promises to be a key player.

Article Citation:

"Congratulations to the 1998 Triumph Award Winners." *Journal of AHIMA* 69, no. 10 (1998): 75-78.

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