

Honoring Those Who  
Make a Difference

2019



**TRIUMPH**  
AWARDS

**3M** Science.  
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**AHIMA**

AHIMA has a long and cherished tradition of honoring the excellence, dedication, and service of those professionals whose steadfast efforts have enriched the health information management (HIM) field. This time-honored celebration of outstanding accomplishments continues with the 2019 AHIMA Triumph Awards.

The AHIMA Triumph Awards are national awards designed to recognize those special individuals who have made a difference in the HIM profession. The AHIMA Triumph Awards honor leaders in the HIM field, reward contributions that build our knowledge base, recognize excellence in preparing future HIM professionals, and encourage fresh talent and new leadership.

**Congratulations to the 2019 AHIMA Triumph Awards recipients and nominees!**

# 2019



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AHIMA gratefully acknowledges  
the generous support of:



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## 2019 AHIMA TRIUMPH AWARDS NOMINEES:

**Karen D. Baytops**, MSM, RHIT

**Sallie C. Bisette**, EdD, MHA, MBA, RHIA, CHC

**Rita K. Bowen**, MA, RHIA, CHPS, SSGB

**Phillip Duong**, RHIA, CCA

**Susie T. Harris**, PhD, MBA, RHIA, CCS,  
FAHIMA

**Briannah Hawkins**

**Jennifer Holland**, RHIT, CPC, CIRCC

**Heather N. Hunn**, RHIA

**Rochelle Cooper Kowalski**, MSA, RHIA,  
CCS, FAHIMA

**Stephanie J. Luthi-Terry**, MA, RHIA,  
CHPS, FAHIMA

**Melissa M. Martin**, MLS, RHIA, CCS, CHTS-IM

**Angel Leigh Moore**, MAEd, RHIA

**Elizabeth M. Morgenroth**, CPC

**Natalie Moore**, MHS

**Patrice L. Spath**, MA, RHIT

**THIMA Opioid Legislation Leadership Team**

**Taralyn M. Vico**

**Elizabeth A. Whitmer**, RHIT, CCS, CCS-P,  
AHDI-F

**Heather Marie Wilson**, MPH, RHIA, CRCR

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## SPECIAL THANKS TO THE 2019 AHIMA TRIUMPH AWARDS COMMITTEE:

### CHAIR

**Renae L. Spohn**, MBA, RHIA, CPHQ, CPHI,  
FNAHQ, FAHIMA

### MEMBERS

**Marie T. Conde**, MPA, RHIA, CCS, FAHIMA

**Theresa A. Eichelmann**, MBA, RHIA

**Diana M. Flood**, MS, RHIA

**Marques Edgar Grant**, RHIA

**Varadraj Prabhu Gurupur**, PhD, MS, RHIA

**Megan A. McDougal**, MS, RHIA, CHTS-IM

**Grissel Pabon**, MS, RHIA, CDIP, CCS, CCS-P

**Isabel Quintana**, MA, RHIA, CCA

### STAFF LIAISONS

**JoAnn V. Coleman**, MPA, CAE

**Marilyn K. Render**

To find out more about  
the AHIMA Triumph Awards,  
visit our website at  
[ahima.org/about/recognition](http://ahima.org/about/recognition).

**Nominations are  
due June 1, 2020**



**CASSI L. BIRNBAUM,  
MS, RHIA, CPHQ, FAHIMA**

The **DISTINGUISHED MEMBER AWARD** is AHIMA's highest honor and Triumph Award. This award celebrates an individual with a long, exceptional history of health information management (HIM) contributions. It is awarded to an outstanding member who has made significant contributions to the field through dedicated volunteer service, innovative professional practice, education, research, presentation, or publishing.

AHIMA is proud to present Cassi L. Birnbaum, MS, RHIA, CPHQ, FAHIMA, as the recipient of the 2019 Distinguished Member Triumph Award. Ms. Birnbaum is currently employed by the University of California San Diego Health System as System-wide Director of HIM/Revenue Integrity.

Throughout her career, Ms. Birnbaum has demonstrated exceptional leadership, volunteerism, and talent. Her invaluable contributions to the profession and to AHIMA include the use of contemporary methods and technology within the industry. She was an early proponent of e-HIM, leveraging healthcare technology, revenue integrity, data governance, CDI and HIM strategy development, and innovation. Words used to describe her professional work include groundbreaking and industry leading.

Birnbaum has been a dedicated and exceptional volunteer for over 30 years. She is frequently asked by AHIMA, California Health Information Association (CHIA) and its local associations, and other groups and organizations to write articles and participate on volunteer committees or task forces. Rarely has she said no to these requests.

As a past Board president/chair of AHIMA (2014–2016), Ms. Birnbaum tirelessly led and guided the industry, profession, and its members to realize its vision with a successful transition to ICD-10, information governance, analytics, informatics, and CDI strategies. As an AHIMA director (2011–2013), she chaired the Governance Committee and the Advocacy and Alliance Task Groups.

During her tenure as a proud past president and board member of the CHIA, she led the way in increasing membership and aligning CHIA's strategies with AHIMA's stated goals. Ms. Birnbaum received CHIA's prestigious Distinguished Member Award in 2009 and Professional Achievement Award in 2002. She continues to serve on various committees at the national, state, and local levels and

in the IFHIMA. Unsurprisingly, she has been the recipient of many awards for her leadership, business experience, and broad understanding of our profession and industry at large. Her awards include 3M's Innovator of the Year Award, the Distinguished Health Professions Alumna Recipient for the University of Kansas, the Outstanding Member Award from the San Diego Health Information Association, and the YWCA's Tribute to Women and Industry (TWIN) Award.

As an educator, she is an adjunct faculty member for San Diego Mesa College and UCSD Extension academic programs, teaching strategic planning and leadership, human resources, and project management for HIM professionals. Ms. Birnbaum assisted in starting up and teaching at the first bachelor's program for HIM at a community college in California. She is passionate and dedicated to promoting our profession and actively mentors those pursuing future careers in HIM at all levels.

Since 2013, Ms. Birnbaum has served as a board member and officer of San Diego Health Connect, a regional HIE. She also actively participates on strategic and innovation councils at the state and national levels and serves on the Advisory Boards for ICD-10 Monitor, Revenue Cycle Exchange, For the Record, Epic's HIM Advisory Council, San Diego Mesa College and UCSD Extension.

She is an excellent communicator and a sought-after public speaker who has authored more than 40 professional articles and delivered more than 200 presentations in the state of California and across the nation on myriad HIM core competencies and topics. She also attained her AHIMA-Approved ICD-10-CM/PCS Trainer and Ambassador status.

AHIMA congratulates Cassi L. Birnbaum for receiving the 2019 AHIMA Distinguished Member Triumph Award. Thank you, for all you have done to advance the HIM profession!



## OHIO HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (OHIMA)

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The **ADVOCACY AWARD** honors those who have exhibited long-standing and enthusiastic support of policy advocacy for the purpose of advancing the health information management (HIM) profession and practices.

AHIMA is proud to select the Ohio Health Information Management Association (OHIMA) as the recipient of the 2019 AHIMA Advocacy Triumph Award. While not a typical method of legislative advocacy for the profession, the application communicated a compelling case describing how the Ohio Health Information Management Association advocated for the HIM profession by creating a short, animated video that showcased the diverse job settings, skills, and functions that make up the HIM profession in an effort to help others to answer that question which is common to us all: “What exactly is health information management?”

The purpose of the video creation by the OHIMA Board of Directors was to aid potential students, human resource departments, and the general HIM profession in understanding and communicating the HIM profession. The video was revealed during the OHIMA 2019 Annual

Meeting and Trade Show where members were encouraged to share the video broadly with employers, human resource departments, and HIM colleagues. Members and other CSAs helped to achieve almost 2,000 views of the video within a few months of release. Kristin M. Nelson, MS, RHIA; Lauren W. Manson, RHIA; and the OHIMA Board are credited with leading this strategic advocacy project. The video can be viewed on the OHIMA website under the “What Is HIM?” link.

AHIMA congratulates OHIMA as the recipient of the 2019 AHIMA Advocacy Triumph Award for successfully advocating for the profession, explaining exactly what HIM professionals do, and encouraging others to join OHIMA to showcase the talent and importance of the HIM professional.



**MARQUETTA M. MASSEY,**  
MBA, RHIA

The **EDUCATOR AWARD** honors those who demonstrate excellence in preparing the next generation of professionals for their health information management (HIM) careers.

AHIMA is proud to select Marquetta M. Massey, MBA, RHIA, as the recipient of the 2019 Educator Triumph Award. Mrs. Massey is employed at Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) in Charlotte, NC, where she has been an instructor since 2012, and program chair since 2015. During her time at CPCC, she has worked persistently to incorporate the widespread use of technology in her courses to enhance the online learning experience for her students.

In 2018, Mrs. Massey received an award at CPCC for “Best Instructional Video” based on her use of creative teaching tools and methods used in her online courses. She has created informational lecture videos to define key practices and further explain complex concepts essential for the career field. Other technology-driven learning methods used in her courses include the addition of avatars in presentations, use of AHIMA Virtual Lab Software Suite, and the technology resources that accompany textbooks used within the courses she teaches.

Mrs. Massey continually strives to improve her teaching to engage learners. In her teaching approach, she collaborates with the students, yet holds the students accountable while providing care and compassion to facilitate learning. She is recognized for her “student-first” stance by providing inventive solutions to support the best learning environment.

When describing her, a fellow colleague stated, “Marquetta brings an infectious level of energy and enthusiasm to her students and fellow colleagues.” As a positive role model for students, she shares her broad knowledge of the HIT field and provides inspiring communications to her students. She motivates students to learn in ways that make a positive influence on how they think, act, and feel. In a letter of support, one colleague noted that “Marquetta dedicates herself to ensuring the students are more than prepared for a professional workplace.”

Mrs. Massey is well-known for mentoring students at various stages in their lives and careers. As a mentor and active member, herself, she encourages students to be involved with AHIMA and their local state association as active members and volunteers.

AHIMA congratulates Marquetta M. Massey for making a positive difference as a leader, role model, and mentor in HIM education and our professional community. We recognize her commitment to the HIM profession and her students and are pleased to present her with the 2019 AHIMA Educator Triumph Award.



**KENNETH H. LUGO-MORALES,  
MS, RHIA**

The **EMERGING LEADER AWARD** honors those individuals who have made great strides and contributions to the health information management (HIM) field and have been employed for over 5 years but fewer than 10 years from the date of entry into the HIM profession.

AHIMA is proud to announce the selection of Kenneth H. Lugo-Morales, MS, RHIA, as the recipient of the 2019 AHIMA Emerging Leader Triumph Award. His unique attributes and demonstrated career accomplishments have deemed him worthy of this prestigious distinction.

Mr. Lugo-Morales currently directs the Health Information Management Department at the San Jorge Children and Women's Hospital in San Juan, PR, where he has successfully implemented the Revenue Cycle Committee resulting in greater chargemaster accuracy, and improved documentation and coding outcomes. Prior to this experience, he served as an asset as a consultant, supervisor, and director of the HIM department at three other hospitals, including the UPR Hospital Dr. Federico Trilla, Hospital Buen Samaritano, and the PR Health Services Administration. As a young graduate, Mr. Lugo-Morales served as project manager for the ICD-10 transition in the PR Health Department and its eight government owned hospitals.

His leadership contribution also extends to his volunteer roles within the Puerto Rico Health Information Management Association (PRHIMA) where he has become an active and dedicated member of the CSA Leadership, first as the Nominating Committee Chair, then becoming president-elect in 2016, and president from 2017–2018. As the current past president, Mr. Lugo-Morales actively collaborates on several

committees and is a CSA Delegate to the AHIMA House of Delegates. As PRHIMA president, he was instrumental in implementing new technological applications that greatly streamlined and improved the registration process and marketing of PRHIMA events. He also developed an educational resource bank of HIM-related professionals to offer trainings.

As a passionate leader, Mr. Lugo-Morales has positively influenced students and young graduates through his example and mentorship. He has been a member of the HIM Advisory Board for the HIM Graduate Program and has served as clinical practice instructor in the professional practice experience (PPE), which he enjoys immensely. His charisma, enthusiasm, and can-do attitude serve as inspiration to others within the profession.

As stated by one of his nominators, "He is the kind of leader and employee who is desired by all companies. Not only able to quickly adjust to any situation, but also capable of working under extreme circumstances attaining outstanding results which was demonstrated during Hurricane Maria coverage."

For his outstanding commitment, AHIMA congratulates Kenneth H. Lugo-Morales as the recipient of the 2019 AHIMA Emerging Leader Triumph Award.



**PATRICIA S. COFFEY,**  
RHIA, CPHIMS, CPHI

The **INNOVATION AWARD** honors those individuals, groups, or organizations focused on moving health information management (HIM) into the future of the healthcare and wellness industry. The Innovation Award honors persons or groups who have promoted important advances in areas related to HIM practice, quality data, patient safety, systems development, and any domain where visionary thinking has made a difference.

AHIMA is proud to select Patricia S. Coffey, RHIA, CPHIMS, CPHI, as the recipient of the 2019 AHIMA Innovation Triumph Award. Ms. Coffey is currently employed by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as the chief of the HIM department in the Clinical Center.

As an HIM professional, Ms. Coffey has an innovative and expansive view of the role of HIM. She is a collaborative and active leader in the National Institutes of Health's strategic improvement initiatives. Examples of her influence include embracing the role of "early influence" in the NIH gender identity efforts, initiating and leading the NIH "Open Notes Revolution" to support cutting-edge patient engagement, and collaborating with the NIH research investigators to develop strategies and tools to facilitate the collection and management of critical research data, while ensuring the integrity of clinical data and patient information. For her efforts on the gender identity initiative, she was invited to discuss this initiative at the 2018 AHIMA Conference and received the NIH 2019 Sexual and Gender Minority Community and Ally Leader Award from the NIH Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

Well before the transition to an electronic medical record was a national initiative, Ms. Coffey positioned the HIM Department at the NIH to transition to a completely paperless medical record. She was awarded the NIH Director's Award for shepherding the path toward an

entirely electronic patient record for her strategic use of technology, for improving patient access to their medical information, and for realizing significant cost savings. A fierce advocate for patients' rights to access their medical record in the patient portal and in accordance with the OpenNotes movement, she is a sought-after colleague and leader regarding her innovative approaches to patient centeredness.

Ms. Coffey's professional affiliations demonstrate her commitment to HIM. She is a member of AHIMA, president-elect of the Maryland Health Information Management Association, a member of the Health Information and Management Systems Society, and past member of the AHIMA Health Informatics Practice Council. She is a co-author of several AHIMA-published articles, including "The Role of Information Governance in the Implementation of Patient Portals."

AHIMA congratulates Patricia S. Coffey for receiving the 2019 AHIMA Innovation Triumph Award. Her forward-thinking and innovation have positively impacted the quality and safety of the delivery of healthcare.





**CHRISANN K. LEMERY,  
MSE, RHIA, CHPS, FAHIMA**

The **LEADERSHIP AWARD** honors those individuals or groups who have provided outstanding service as a leader(s) for a minimum of 10 years; demonstrated ongoing leadership competency with the Association and the health information management (HIM) profession; adhered to and advocated for the AHIMA Code of Ethics, and any other appropriate codes of conduct; valued honesty, integrity, and transparency; worked as team players and collaborators; are recognized as a qualified authority in the HIM profession; and present a positive professional image for the Association and the profession.

Chrisann K. Lemery, MSE, RHIA, CHPS, FAHIMA exemplifies the attributes of the AHIMA Leadership Triumph Award. She has been an AHIMA member for over 30 years and is very passionate in promoting the field of HIM. She shares this passion through volunteering, visionary leadership, and speaking engagements.

Ms. Lemery has served in many leadership capacities, including roles in the Wisconsin Health Information Management Association (WHIMA) as president, past-president, and board member, in addition to secretary of the AHIMA Board of Directors and Speaker of the House of Delegates. Her volunteer activities related to advocacy and legislation are iconic, including serving on the award-winning HIPAA Collaborative of Wisconsin (HIPAA COW) Board of Directors, and participating in state and national Hill Days, and serving on government-appointed committees addressing electronic health records (EHRs) and medical record copy fees. Her participation has aided numerous committees at the national and state levels, including AHIMA Privacy and Security and Enterprise Information Management Practice Councils, the Advocacy and Policy Council and the Professional Ethics Committee. She has also been awarded the prestigious Fellowship designation by AHIMA peers.

As a result of her experiences in all sectors of the

healthcare industry, she always keeps a watchful eye for new regulations and healthcare industry information and alerts others to share what she has learned. She is a true HIM professional leader who has a tremendous amount of knowledge, understanding, vision, and passion. She has shared invaluable insights with AHIMA, WHIMA, HIPAA COW, and numerous other colleagues and contacts.

Ms. Lemery is a well-known author and speaker on a variety of HIM-related topics and is the “go-to” person for many. She has given more than 70 presentations demonstrating her compassion for sharing her knowledge. She is active in academia, serving on college advisory boards and as a mentor to future HIM professionals by sharing her experience.

A highly respected colleague and friend, Ms. Lemery’s leadership impact is felt throughout the HIM community. AHIMA congratulates Chrisann K. Lemery as the recipient of the 2019 AHIMA Leadership Triumph Award.



**TRESSA A. LYON,**  
RHIT

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The **MENTOR AWARD** honors individuals or groups with long records of encouraging individuals to realize their full potential or have helped them find ways to achieve their best.

Tressa A. Lyon, RHIT, is the 2019 recipient of the AHIMA Mentor Triumph Award. Ms. Lyon is currently the health information management (HIM) manager at Norman Regional Hospital in Norman, OK, and a member of the executive board for the Oklahoma Health Information Management Association (OkHIMA).

A 12-year veteran in the HIM field, Ms. Lyon has inspired countless students and peers to better themselves, not just professionally, but personally, as well. Serving on multiple committees through her career, her CSA, and her personal life, she has touched many lives with her bubbly personality and willingness to share skills, knowledge, and expertise. Professional committees she's been involved with include the Medical Decision-Making Committee, Documentation Management Chair, Patient Portal Committee, ICD-10 Project Manager, and Outcomes and Efficiencies Team. Her level of engagement with those she mentors has led to recognition as the Norman Regional Health System Employee of the Month in January 2014.

Ms. Lyon also serves as a mentor for many colleges and universities in Oklahoma and through OkHIMA. Active with the OkHIMA convention planning committee for

numerous years, she has mentored many students from being a fresh face to a successful leader at the state and national level. When asked about Ms. Lyon, her nominator states, "She puts off an infectious love for HIM to all those around her. She mentored me in things a student could only dream of and helped broaden my understanding of how huge an impact HIM can have." Another nominator says, "Tressa not only made me feel like I was part of the process but made me feel empowered to do them. I am certain I am not the only one with this story after working with her."

Ms. Lyon is a valuable team member no matter her level of involvement. She is an inspiration to those around her and shows great respect to the learning process. She is a credit not just to the HIM field, but to all those whose path she crosses. A highly respected and sought-after mentor, Ms. Lyon's contributions will be felt in the HIM community for years to come.

AHIMA congratulates Tressa A. Lyon as the recipient of the 2019 AHIMA Mentor Triumph Award.



**LAURA A. SHUE,**  
MPA, CHDA, CPHIMS

The **RISING STAR AWARD** honors those individuals who are up and coming in the HIM field and have been employed for five years or less from the date of entry in the HIM profession.

AHIMA is proud to announce the selection of Laura Ann Shue, MPA, CHDA, CPHIMS, as the recipient of the 2019 Rising Star Triumph Award. Ms. Shue was chosen for this award based on her demonstrated commitment to the health information management (HIM) profession, and her leadership roles both in the workplace and within her state association.

Ms. Shue graduated from Eastern Michigan University in 2011 with a Master's in Public Administration (MPA), and a concentration in healthcare administration. She subsequently earned her CHDA in 2012 and CPHIMS in 2016. Currently, she serves as the HIM operations director for Michigan Medicine (University of Michigan Health System), a position she has held since 2014. While in this role, Ms. Shue successfully engaged in wide-scale efforts to reduce medical record delinquencies and improve EHR functionality within her organization, and advocated for quality, data management, data analytics, and management development. She has held a variety of leadership roles and demonstrated a capacity to adapt and lead change within her organization by bringing together clinical, IT, and HIM resources to collaborate on various strategic initiatives.

In addition to her professional commitments, she is an active member of the Michigan Health Information Management Association (MHIMA) and is currently president-elect of the organization. She has served on the MHIMA board of directors since 2016, and helped kickstart the MHIMA Student Concierge Program, an initiative which introduces students to the importance of volunteerism and helps to develop their professionalism and project management skills. She has also represented the HIM profession at local collegiate events, where she regularly engages with HIM/HIT students to mentor and develop new HIM professionals.

In the words of one of her nominators, "In the nearly five years Laura has been active in HIM at Michigan Medicine, she has been instrumental in changing the perception of the institution of HIM staff. The HIM department, today, is known as a partner that any team or unit would be glad to have alongside them in the trenches." For all of her efforts and dedication to the HIM profession, AHIMA congratulates Laura Ann Shue as the recipient of the 2019 AHIMA Rising Star Triumph Award.



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