



*Association of State and  
Territorial Dental Director  
2026 Awards*

**2026 ASTDD Awards Committee**

Russell Dunkel, DDS, BS, BA, FACD, FICD, FPFA, ASTDD President

Chris Farrell, RDH, BSDH, MPA

McAllister Castelaz, DMD, MS, FAGD, FACD

# 2026 ASTDD Fluoridation Special Merit Award

## The Kentucky Oral Health Program

ASTDD is pleased to present the 2026 Fluoridation Merit Award to the Kentucky Oral Health Program, in recognition of its exceptional leadership and innovation in community water fluoridation.

Kentucky has a long and distinguished history in dental public health, becoming the third state in the nation with a public dental health program in 1928. Community water fluoridation has been integral to that work since 1951, when the program initiated its first fluoridation efforts in Maysville. Today, fluoridated communities serve nearly 99 percent of the state's population, making Kentucky a national leader in access to the benefits of optimally fluoridated water.

In recent years, the Kentucky Oral Health Program and its partners successfully opposed a statewide "local option" bill that would have threatened fluoridation, and they continue to strengthen local systems' capacity for operational excellence and efficiency as similar challenges re-emerge. With strong support from the state oral health director, the fluoridation team has developed, implemented, and shared technical best management practices, encouraged compliance with standards, promoted performance improvement, and created training modules and tools that can be adapted by other programs.

The team has built a surveillance database designed to identify facilities that may benefit from additional training and education in fluoride sample analysis, taking a constructive rather than punitive approach. They work intentionally to build and maintain relationships with community water systems, including collaborating on an alternative to manual colorimetric testing and sharing its benefits with other systems. Their generosity extends beyond Kentucky's borders as they provide templates, talking points, on-site training, and presentations to help other states gain buy-in from both water and health partners.

Kentucky's community water fluoridation specialists embody a "can-do" spirit, focusing on the "why" and the "how" to get the job done, making even complex technical topics accessible and relatable. For their enduring commitment to excellence in fluoridation at home and their enthusiastic willingness to share their expertise nationwide, ASTDD is proud to honor the Kentucky Oral Health Program with the 2026 Fluoridation Merit Award.

# 2026 ASTDD Excellence in Communications Award

## CareQuest Institute for Oral Health

The committee was very impressed by this year's entrants, but especially by how CareQuest compiled this important report and how effectively it demonstrates the CareQuest Institute's impact on oral health in 2025. Through its use of color, graphics, concise messaging, and callouts illustrating grantee achievements, the CareQuest Impact Report not only demonstrates impact but also inspires us to strive for an oral health system that works for everyone.



[CareQuest Institute's Impact Report](#) for 2025

# 2026 M. Dean Perkins Distinguished Service Award

**Kathryn D. Hunt, RDH, ECPII, FADHA**

and

**Gina M. Sharps, MPH, RDH, CTTS, FADHA**



ASTDD is honored to present the M. Dean Perkins Distinguished Service Award to Kathy Hunt and Gina Sharps, whose careers exemplify sustained, exemplary service to dental public health at the local, state, and national levels.

Kathy and Gina have provided extraordinary leadership to ASTDD through the Office of Head Start’s National Center on Health, Behavioral Health and Safety Dental Hygienist Liaison (DHL) project, a national initiative launched in 2012 to promote oral health care for pregnant people, young children in Head Start, and their families. The project engages one volunteer dental hygienist in each state, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands—“boots on the ground” who support Head Start programs locally—supported by regional DHL coordinators.

After serving with distinction as state DHLs and regional DHL coordinators, Gina became the DHL project co-lead consultant in 2018, and Kathy assumed the role of lead consultant in 2020. In these roles, they did far more than manage a project; they built a national community of practice, offering expertise, guidance, and mentorship that empowered DHLs across the country to strengthen partnerships with Head Start programs and state oral health organizations.

Kathy and Gina have maintained the ASTDD DHL project discussion list and webpage, developed and curated numerous resources, and compiled project activities in quarterly reports that document impact and spread promising practices. They have also represented ASTDD through exhibits and presentations at the National Oral Health Conference and the American Dental Hygienists' Association, extending the project's reach and visibility.

Their contributions extend well beyond the DHL project. Kathy's leadership with Oral Health Kansas' Pathways to Oral Health initiative includes developing the "Confidence in Every Smile" video series, which offers practical, adaptive strategies to help people with disabilities and their caregivers maintain daily oral health routines. Gina's work with the West Virginia Department of Health included designing educational programs for non-dental personnel, leading media campaigns to raise awareness of dental needs, and building school- and community-based collaborations to integrate oral health into broader health and education efforts.

Together, Kathy Hunt and Gina Sharps embody the spirit of M. Dean Perkins through their evidence-based approach, commitment to equity, deep respect for families and communities, and enduring dedication to ASTDD's mission. ASTDD is proud to recognize them for their distinguished service and their lasting impact on dental public health nationwide.

Nominated by:

Katrina Holt, MPH, MS, RD, FAND  
Director, National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center  
Professor, Department of Pediatrics  
Georgetown University

Bev Isman, MPH, RDH, ELS  
Consultant  
ASTDD

# **2026 Outstanding Achievement Award & Greg McClure Memorial President's Award**

**Christine Wood, RDH, BS**



ASTDD is proud to recognize Christine Wood with both the ASTDD Outstanding Achievement Award and the Greg McClure Memorial President's Award in 2026, honoring her extraordinary and sustained contributions to ASTDD and to dental public health nationwide.

Chris has been a cornerstone of ASTDD leadership for more than two decades. She has served on the Board of Directors as Treasurer (2004–2006), President-Elect (2006–2008), and President (2008–2009), and then as Executive Director from 2009 to 2025 before assuming her current role as Deputy Executive Director. In these roles, she has guided the organization through periods of significant growth and change, strengthening its infrastructure, partnerships, and impact.

Throughout her tenure, Chris has contributed to and shaped nearly every major ASTDD initiative. She has provided leadership, editing, and content expertise for cornerstone documents such as ASTDD Bylaws and Strategic Plans, both versions of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Manual, and numerous publications developed by committees including the Healthy Aging Committee and the Best

Practices Committee. She has also served as an adjunct advisor or contributor to almost every ASTDD committee, ensuring strong connections across projects and partners.

Chris's influence extends far beyond ASTDD. She has held leadership and service roles in many national and state organizations, including the American Public Health Association (where she served as Oral Health Section Governing Councilor, Councilor, and Policy Committee Chair), the National Network for Oral Health Access, the American Association of Public Health Dentistry, the American Dental Hygienists' Association, the Medicaid/Medicare/CHIP Dental Services Association, the American Association for Community Dental Programs, and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, where she chaired the Affiliate Council Health Equity Committee.

Across all these roles, Chris has demonstrated the qualities these awards were created to honor:

- exceptional leadership
- deep commitment to health equity, and
- a tireless dedication to supporting state and territorial oral health programs and their directors.

Her vision, integrity, and generosity have strengthened ASTDD's voice, advanced dental public health policy and practice, and nurtured the next generation of leaders.

For her outstanding achievements, distinguished career, and unwavering service to ASTDD and the broader dental public health community, ASTDD is delighted to present Christine Wood with both the Outstanding Achievement Award and the Greg McClure Memorial President's Award.

Nominated by:

Russell Dunkel, DDS, BS, BA, FACD, FICD, FPFA