



# *The Governor's Office of* **DISABILITY AFFAIRS**

The **Governor's Office of Disability Affairs** is excited to host the **2025 Governor's Outstanding Leadership in Disabilities (GOLD) awards**. The GOLD Awards are an opportunity for Louisiana to pay tribute to the achievements and dedication of individuals in the disability community.

## **2025 Governor's Outstanding Leadership in Disabilities (GOLD) Awards**

### **GOLD Award Categories**

**Distinguished Merit Award  
Patsy Barrett Memorial Award  
Ken Vince Memorial Award  
April Dunn Youth of the Year  
Educator of the Year  
Family of the Year  
Volunteer of the Year**

**Employer of the Year  
Service Provider of the Year  
Direct Support Professional of the Year  
Veteran of the Year  
Service Animal of the Year  
Elected Official of the Year  
Public Servant of the Year**

The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs strives to structure the awards ceremony to celebrate all Louisiana citizens who have inspired positive changes within the disability community. With your help, the **2025 GOLD Awards** will honor the devotion and talents of those who have worked diligently to make Louisiana a better place for all people. Nominations of any person or group deserving of such recognition is encouraged.

- All nominations must include a completed nomination form, letter of recommendation describing the nominee's achievements and contributions, along with letters of support from others.
- Submissions for nominations are due by end of the day **Monday, November 3, 2025**.
- Nomination packets must be completed through the online form, emailed to [disability.affairs@la.gov](mailto:disability.affairs@la.gov) or mailed to the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs, 1051 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St, Suite 136, Baton Rouge, LA 70802
- Nomination forms, supporting documents, and photographs will not be returned.
- All questions should be directed to [disability.affairs@la.gov](mailto:disability.affairs@la.gov) or 225-219-7553.

## Distinguished Merit Award

***This award is given in recognition of extraordinary services by an individual, organization, or firm working in the disability field that has consistently presented opportunities in Louisiana for people with disabilities to utilize their capabilities in achieving full participation in society.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- Makes strides in expanding educational opportunities.
- Creates initiatives to improve access to housing, buildings, and transportation.
- Participated in recreational, social, and cultural activities.
- Advocates for greater opportunities for employment for people with disabilities.
- Enhances rehabilitation programs/facilities for people with disabilities.
- Increase the application of technology on behalf of people with disabilities.

## Patsy Barrett Memorial Award

***Patsy Barrett was a human rights activist, who initiated the GOLD Awards in 1982 to recognize people who work for equality, justice, and dignity for people with disabilities. Ms. Barrett was also involved in policy development at the national level and worked with leaders helping to formulate the Americans with Disabilities Act into Federal law.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- A female with disabilities recognized for her leadership abilities and achievements as a disability advocate.

## Ken Vince Memorial Award

***Ken Vince was a rehabilitation counselor who touched the lives of hundreds of people in Louisiana through his advocacy for people with disabilities. His commitment generated a greater public awareness of the needs of people with disabilities and foster a greater participation in society for the disability community.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- A male with disabilities recognized for his leadership abilities and achievements as a disability advocate.

## Educator of the Year

***This award is given in recognition of an outstanding individual who has contributed significantly to educating people with disabilities in our community.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- Demonstrates outstanding leadership within the field of education for people with disabilities.
- Advances the importance of education and awareness through strong advocacy and programs.
- Motivates and inspires others including students, colleagues, and members of the community.
- Positively influences students with disabilities.

## April Dunn Youth of the Year

***April Dunn was the Senior Coordinator in the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs and Chairperson of the Developmental Disabilities Council. She was a vocal and respected advocate and leader who advocated on many issues, including education, employment, healthcare, home and community-based services, housing, transportation, and recreation. She was also known for her ability to share her experiences as a person with a disability in a way that was very impactful and led to many laws and policies benefitting people with disabilities.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- Must be between 13-25 years of age.
- Participates in activities for the benefit of people with disabilities.
- Demonstrate outstanding exceptional achievement and leadership.
- Promotes disability pride and acceptance.
- Contributes toward increased awareness for people with disabilities.

## Family of the Year

***This award is given in recognition of a family who has family member(s) with disabilities and who, by involvement in the community, and mutual support of one another, is/are an example of courage, strength, and unity for other families in Louisiana. Traditional and non-traditional families are encouraged to apply.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- Meets the challenges of a disability and recognized the beauty.
- Maintains outstanding efforts in achieving a dynamic and cohesive family unit.
- Recognizes the contributions of each family member.
- Participates in community.
- Recognized in the community for quality of family life and participation in community.

## Volunteer of the Year

***This award is given in recognition of extraordinary service by a volunteer or organization that has substantially enhanced the opportunities in Louisiana for people with disabilities to use their skills and develop their potential as members of society.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- Demonstrates outstanding or exceptional contributions as a volunteer.
- Participates in activities for the benefit of people with disabilities.
- Exhibits selflessness and a willingness to devote time, talents, and efforts on behalf of people with disabilities.
- Makes contributions that increase public awareness and understanding of people with disabilities.

## Employer of the Year

***This award is given in recognition of outstanding achievement in providing integrated competitive employment and career opportunities for people with disabilities.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- Maintains an excellent history of hiring people with disabilities in integrated, competitive employment.
- Provides meaningful integrated competitive employment and career opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Supports and promotes people with disabilities to succeed in their career field.

## Service Provider of the Year

***This award is given in recognition of service above and beyond the call of duty by an individual or organizational provider of services to people with disabilities.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- Demonstrates outstanding or exceptional contributions as a provider of services.
- Participates in activities for the benefit of people with disabilities beyond the scope of compensated services.
- Exhibits selflessness and a willingness to devote uncompensated time, talents, and efforts on behalf of people with disabilities.
- Makes contributions that increase public awareness and understanding of people with disabilities.

## Direct Support Professional of the Year

***This award is given in recognition of extraordinary service by a direct support professional that has substantially enhanced the life of people with disabilities to live more independently and productive, as well as support self-determination and individual development.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- Shows unconditional respect for the daily choices and life goals of the person(s) they assist.
- Exhibits dependability.

## Veteran of the Year

***This award is given in recognition of a veteran with a disability who has served honorably in the United States Armed Forces and has a record of exemplary service in the disability community.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- Contributes towards increased awareness for veterans with disabilities in the community.
- Devotes outstanding volunteer efforts in their community.
- Works continually to inspire others.
- Honorably discharged veteran of the United States Armed Forces.

## Service Animal of the Year

***This award is given in recognition of a service animal who has exhibited exceptional assistance to a person with a disability.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- Pulls wheelchairs, carries, and/or retrieves things.
- Assists persons with mobility impairments with balance.
- Assists with behavioral, emotional, and mental health.
- Assists with other health-related tasks.
- Both owner and service animal have demonstrated perseverance in facing barriers.

## Elected Official of the Year

***This award is given in recognition of an extraordinary service by an elected official that has substantially supported or enhanced the opportunities for people with disabilities.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- Demonstrates outstanding or exceptional contributions as an elected official.
- Participates or supports activities for the benefit of people with disabilities.
- Exhibits selflessness and a willingness to devote time, talents, and efforts on behalf of people with disabilities.
- Makes contributions that increase public awareness and understanding of people with disabilities.

## Public Servant of the Year

***This award is given in to a government employee in recognition of outstanding achievement in hard work and dedicated service for people with disabilities.***

Examples of nominee attributes:

- Maintains an excellent history of serving, working for and with people with disabilities.
- Exhibits selflessness and a willingness to devote time, talents, and efforts on behalf of people with disabilities.
- Supports and promotes individuals with disabilities to succeed, have better outcomes, and improved quality of life.
- Goes above and beyond the expectations of their job description and is highly regarded by the disability community.

# 2025 GOLD Awards Nomination Form

(Please Print)

Nominee's Information	
Name:	
Address:	
City, LA: Zip	
Phone Number:	
Email:	

Is the Nominee aware they are being nominated?    YES ☐    NO ☐

Which award are you nominating the person/organization/animal?    Choose an item.

Your Information	
(Nominators must be present at the ceremony and provide an introduction if the nominee is selected.)	
Name:	
Address:	
City, LA: Zip	
Phone Number:	
Email:	

**Nominations are due by Monday, November 3, 2025**

Submit nominations to:

[Disability.affairs@la.gov](mailto:Disability.affairs@la.gov)

Or mail to  
Governor's Office of Disability Affairs  
1051 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St, Suite 136  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

**Incomplete packets will not be considered.**

**All nomination packets must include the following:**

1. Completed nomination form.
2. Letter of recommendation describing the nominee's achievements and contributions.
3. Letters of support from others.