



Congratulations to the Presidential IMPACT Award Recipients: *The AMTA Competency Review Task Force*



Laurie Keogh
CRTF Co-Chair
Mid-Atlantic
2018-2024



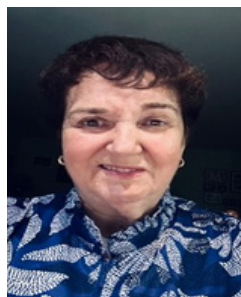
Piper Laird
CRTF Co-Chair
Western
2018-2024



Kamile Geist
Initial Co-Chair
Great-Lakes
2018-2019



Ed Kahler
Initial Co-Chair
Western
2018-2019



Jane Creagan**
AMTA Liaison
2018-2022



Della Molloy-Daugherty
Southwestern
2018-2024



Deanna Hanson-Abromeit
Midwestern
2018-2020



Jennifer Peyton
Southeastern
2021-2024



Tracy Richardson**
Great-Lakes
2018-2024



Victoria Policastro Vega
Southeastern
2018-2024



Gary Verhagen
Mid-Atlantic
2018-2024

****Also on Commission for Education and Clinical Training of the 21st Century Music Therapist**

The Competency Review Task Force has received the 2025 Presidential Impact Award in recognition of their individual and collective work to develop recommended updates to the AMTA Professional Competencies and Advanced Competencies, reflecting the growth and evolving knowledge of the profession.

Since its formation in 2018, the Task Force has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to professionalism, transparency, collaboration, and inclusion by seeking diverse perspectives from groups and individuals across the country. Their continued engagement through the submission of recommendations in 2024 and the Association's governance processes has helped advance competencies that will strengthen the profession nationally and around the world for years to come.

About the Award

A Presidential Commendation recognizing those who have made a substantial impact on advancing the Association, its mission, and the music therapy profession that will provide positive outcomes well into the future.



American Music Therapy Association

2025 AMTA Research/Publications Award

Eugenia Hernández Ruiz, PhD, MT-BC



Dr. Hernández Ruiz is recognized for her scholarly work spanning family music therapy, autism, music therapy education, community music therapy, wellbeing, and the impact of music therapy on anxiety and other adverse symptoms in domestic violence contexts. Her strong publication record and ability to collaborate across institutional boundaries, philosophical perspectives, and international contexts advance scholarly goals that contribute to the growth and recognition of the profession.

About the Award

Recognizing an AMTA Member whose research, scholarly activity or creative products have resulted in advanced knowledge and development in the field of music therapy.

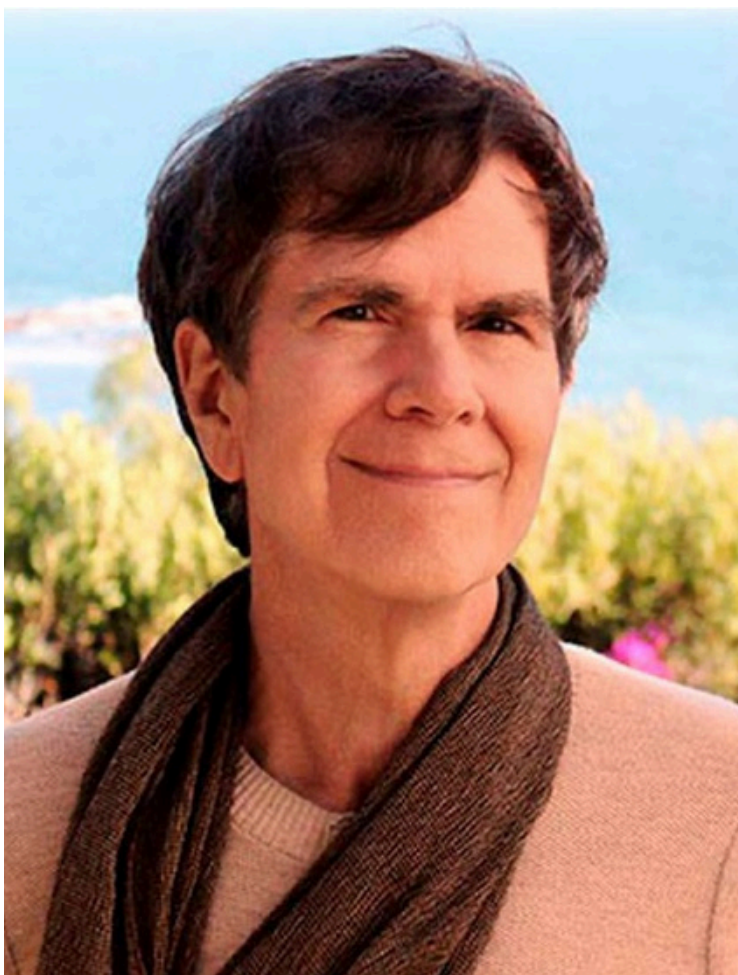


American Music Therapy Association

2025 AMTA Advocate of Music Therapy

Chuck Wild

Composer, Producer, and Emmy-Nominated Songwriter



For more than two decades, Chuck Wild has been a consummate advocate for music therapy both in advancing the field and supporting the American Music Therapy Association and its members. Through his public advocacy, collaboration with music therapists to compose and donate customized music for use by qualified music therapists, financial support of AMTA conferences, and assistance in research, he has expanded awareness of music therapy and strengthened resources for music therapy professionals.

About the Award

Honoring a non-music therapist who has contributed significantly to the field.



American Music Therapy Association

2025 AMTA Service Award

Amanda Bringham, MM, MT-BC *Colorado State Legislative Task Force*



Amanda Bringham has dedicated more than 30 years of leadership and advocacy to the music therapy profession, including eight years chairing the Colorado Legislative State Task Force and persistent efforts toward state recognition of the MT-BC credential. Most recently, she collaborated with the AMTA/CBMT National Team to lead a successful statewide effort to prevent significant Medicaid rate cuts for music therapy, educating policymakers and mobilizing professionals to protect access to services for thousands of consumers and the sustainability of music therapy providers.

About the Award

Recognizing an AMTA member who has provided service to the Association and profession either through long term commitments or task limited activities.



American Music Therapy Association

2025 Professional Practice Award

Elizabeth Herr Collier, MBA, MT-BC



Elizabeth Herr Collier is recognized for her exceptional leadership, innovation, and sustained service to music therapy through the development of exemplary pediatric clinical programs, mentorship, research, and professional advocacy. Her far-reaching impact - strengthening clinical practice, advancing evidence-based care, developing future leaders, and shaping the profession at local, regional, and national levels - exemplifies the highest standards of professional excellence and dedication to the field.

About the Award

Awarded to an individual that holds the MT-BC credential, who has made a significant contribution to the practice of music therapy. Open to non-members but must be nominated by an AMTA member.



American Music Therapy Association

2025 Award of Merit *Jennifer Geiger, EdD, MT-BC*



Jennifer Geiger has served AMTA and the profession with decades of distinguished leadership and service. She has served multiple terms in the Association's highest elected offices, provided continued support during times of organizational challenge, and made meaningful contributions through presentations, mentorship, scholarly activities, and community involvement. Her collaborative leadership, commitment to lifelong learning, and ability to engage and empower diverse voices have strengthened both AMTA and the music therapy profession while modeling a long-lasting commitment to service.

About the Award

Recognizing AMTA members who have contributed to the development of the profession in a unique and remarkable way.



American Music Therapy Association

2025 Award of Merit *Blythe LaGasse, PhD, MT-BC*



Blythe LaGasse has demonstrated sustained, outstanding contributions across research, clinical practice, education, professional communication, and AMTA service, advancing evidence-based music therapy while educating future professionals and strengthening the Association. Her influential scholarship, national and international presentations, editorial leadership, mentorship, and extensive AMTA governance and service have profoundly benefited the profession and created an enduring legacy for music therapists and the communities they serve.

About the Award

Recognizing AMTA members who have contributed to the development of the profession in a unique and remarkable way.



American Music Therapy Association

2025 Lifetime Achievement Award *Michele Forinash, DA, MT-BC, LMHC*



Michele Forinash contributed to the music therapy profession through several decades of extraordinary, sustained commitment to music therapy education, clinical practice, research, leadership, and professional advocacy. Her career reflects a primary role in the establishment and continued growth of the profession, demonstrated by extensive national leadership within both the American Association of Music Therapy (AAMT) and the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA). She served as AMTA President, numerous other key organizational roles, including her early service on the Unification Commission on Education and Clinical Training and her ongoing commitment to the Fultz Research Award.

As an educator and academic leader, she has shaped music therapy and doctoral education through decades of teaching, mentorship, program development, and

university leadership. Her clinical work in hospice, palliative care, geriatrics, mental health, and rehabilitation reflects a lifelong commitment to expanding access to meaningful, high-quality music therapy services, while her extensive scholarship has advanced qualitative and phenomenological research, supervision, professional education, feminist practice, and LGBTQ+ and queer/trans-affirming music therapy.

Through her publications, presentations, editorial leadership, interdisciplinary service, and mentorship of generations of music therapists and scholars, Dr. Forinash has demonstrated exceptional innovation, ethical and professional excellence, and a sustained vision for the future of the field. Her influence extends beyond individual accomplishments to the development of research methodologies, educational frameworks, professional standards, and inclusive practices that have shaped music therapy and the broader creative arts therapies. Collectively, her leadership, scholarship, service, advocacy, and mentorship represent a lasting legacy that profoundly advances the mission of AMTA and embodies Honorary Lifetime Achievement, AMTA's most prestigious award.

About the Award

The Lifetime Achievement award recognizes an individual's lifetime of commitment and dedication to the field of music therapy. It is bestowed by the AMTA Board of Directors on individuals to signify their having a primary role in the establishment and continued growth of the field of music therapy. This award can be given posthumously and is the most prestigious of all the awards.



American Music Therapy Association

2025 Lifetime Achievement Award

Kamile Geist, PhD, MT-BC



Kamile Geist, PhD., MT-BC, has led a distinguished career of leadership, scholarship, education, innovation, and service to the music therapy profession. Her sustained national service to AMTA included visionary leadership of the Competency Review Task Force, long-term service and co-chairmanship of the Academic Program Approval Committee, participation on the Education and Training Advisory Board, and contributions to the Anti-Discrimination Policy Statement Task Force, demonstrate her commitment to professional standards, educational excellence, ethical practice, and equity.

As an academic leader at Ohio University and Louisiana State University, and Louisiana State University, Dr. Geist developed and strengthened music therapy programs, mentored generations of students and faculty, and created innovative

Arts in Health programs, including a graduate certificate and master's degree. She was the first Ava and Cordell Haymon Endowed Chair of Music Therapy at Louisiana State University where she was instrumental in creating the Bachelor of Music Therapy program, the first of its kind at a state university in Louisiana. This illustrates her vision and lasting commitment to expanding access to music therapy education. Her scholarship, including the nationally and internationally presented *Keep a Beat* initiative, advanced accessible, evidence-based music strategies for children, caregivers, and educators and extended the reach of music therapy beyond traditional clinical settings. Dr. Geist's teaching excellence and scholarly contributions were recognized through multiple institutional and professional honors, while her publications, research funding and presentations further strengthened the profession's knowledge base and visibility.

Across her clinical, academic, research, and professional service career, Dr. Geist has demonstrated exceptional integrity, innovation, leadership, and dedication to preparing future music therapists. Her contributions have had a lasting impact on music therapy education, professional standards, research, interdisciplinary practice, and access to music-informed health and learning. Dr. Geist has created a legacy that continues to advance the field, inspire others, and represents the Honorary Lifetime Achievement Award with the highest standards.

With deep sadness, Dr. Geist passed away February 12, 2025. Her obituary may be [found here](#). This award was given posthumously.

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