

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**April 29, 2026**

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## **Tennessee Higher Education Commission Honors 2026 Harold Love Award Recipients**

**NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Wednesday, April 29** - The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is proud to announce the recipients of the 2026 Harold Love Outstanding Community Service Awards, recognizing students, faculty, and staff who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to serving their communities.

Named for the late Representative Harold Love Sr., a longtime advocate for community service and a graduate of Tennessee State University, the awards honor individuals who carry forward his legacy of compassion and service.



### **2026 Harold Love Award Recipients:**

#### **Students**

- **Noah Wren**, East Tennessee State University - Integrated Studies, Accounting Administration and Enterprise Rhetoric
- **Gracee DeJarnette**, East Tennessee State University - Global Citizen Honors Scholar
- **RJ Ware**, Middle Tennessee State University - Political Science, Criminal Justice
- **Jasmine West**, Southwest Tennessee Community College - Agricultural Business
- **Joshua Clay**, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga - Public Health, Biostatistics

## **Faculty/Staff**

- **Dr. Stephen Haynes**, Rhodes College – Professor of Religious Studies
- **Dr. Bill McKee**, Cumberland University – Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- **Dr. Rick Dierenfeldt**, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga – UC Foundation Professor and Head of the Department of Criminal Justice
- **Dr. Chandra Ware**, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga – UC Foundation Professor and Associate Professor of Sociology
- **Senior Master Sergeant Chuck Patton**, East Tennessee State University – Staff, Department of Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety Sciences

The Harold Love Outstanding Community Service Awards recognize individuals who demonstrate outstanding commitment to their communities through volunteerism, public service, and leadership, serving as ambassadors for service across Tennessee's higher education institutions.

"My father believed deeply in the power of service to transform lives and strengthen communities," said Representative Harold Love, Jr. "These award recipients embody that spirit, and it's an honor to see his legacy carried forward through their work across Tennessee."

Elected to the General Assembly in 1968, Representative Harold Love, Sr. was known for his compassion and good humor. A prominent Nashville insurance salesman, Representative Love also served on the board of directors for the South Street Center and the Eighteenth Avenue Community Center. He graduated from Tennessee State University and was awarded its Distinguished Alumnus Award.

With the welfare of his community as his primary concern, Representative Love would go to any lengths to help a constituent in need, even if it meant giving from his own pocket. That is why whenever he was present during a session of the House of Representatives, it was said, "Love is in the House."

Established by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1991 and later named in his honor, the awards reflect Representative Love's enduring legacy of service and dedication to others.

THEC congratulates this year's recipients for their outstanding service and lasting impact on their communities.

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**About the Tennessee Higher Education Commission**



The Tennessee Higher Education Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly. As the state's higher education coordinating body, its mission is to build a strong higher education landscape that provides opportunities for all individuals to pursue high-quality education and high-value credentials.