



FLORIDA NURSES ASSOCIATION

16th Annual South Region Symposium & Awards Ceremony

Awards Nomination Packet

*Gulfstream Park Sport of Kings Theater
901 S Federal Highway
Hallandale Beach, Florida 33009*

Saturday, April 18, 2026

9:00am – 2:30pm

RSVP: <https://www.floridanurse.org/event/SouthSymposium2026>

*At the heart of every profession are exceptional individuals who make a difference!
This program is dedicated to the recognition of our members who go the extra mile.*

Nominate a nurse colleague today!

Purpose/Goals of Awards Program

The Florida Nurses Association's (FNA) South Region recognizes professional nurses in the State of Florida's Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe counties. Receiving a peer award is one of the highest honors afforded a professional nurse. The Awards Committee will review the nominations and make final recommendations for award winners.

Types of Awards

The FNA's South Region is proud to celebrate its 16th Annual Symposium and Awards Ceremony. This prestigious event recognizes the outstanding contributions and achievements of our dedicated nursing professionals. This year's ceremony will highlight excellence and innovation within our academic institutions, healthcare systems, and community partners in the Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe County areas.

Deadlines

The deadline for submitting nominations for the 16th Annual Symposium and Awards Ceremony is **April 3, 2026**. It is important that the nomination awards packet includes all information as specified in the General Procedures section of this manual.

Judging

Members of the Awards Committee shall not be nominees or nominators of any award for the year of selection. Only information submitted for validation of the nominee's achievements or contributions will be considered in judging the awards. If, in the opinion of the judges, there is not an acceptable candidate for an award as submitted, the award may be withheld for the current year.

General Procedures

1. Nominees must be professional nurses who are residing or working and registered in the State of Florida's South Region (Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe counties).
2. An award winner shall not be eligible for the same award in consecutive years.
3. Two letters of recommendation shall be provided by individuals who are in a position to judge the quality of the nominee's contribution (e.g., employer, immediate supervisor, peer, knowledgeable colleague) plus a business/professional headshot of the nominee. Letters should highlight how nominee meets core criteria of the award. Please do NOT send a full curriculum vitae or resume.
 - **Each letter of recommendation needs to be submitted as a separate Word document**
4. All 12 award categories will be recognized based on entries.
5. All nomination packets will be emailed to Dr. Alina Diaz-Cruz, Chair of the Awards Committee at:
fnasouthawards@gmail.com

Writing a Recommendation for an FNA Peer Recognition Award

The letter of recommendation or the nomination form is key to creating a winning nomination. This information is what the committee members will base their scoring on. Some suggestions for a winning recommendation include:

1. Introduce the nominee by name and the name of the award plus a photo.
2. State how long you have known the candidate and discuss the nature of your relationship.
3. Address the **core criteria** of the award as listed in the 2026 FNA's South Region Nomination Packet.
4. Clearly list your nominee's achievements **as related to the core criteria** of the award.
5. **Be descriptive and give specific examples** of how the nominee meets the criteria. Avoid vague statements.
6. Include a **strong concluding statement summarizing** the individual's qualification for the award.

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Distinguished Academic Nurse Leader Award

Description: This award recognizes the exceptional contributions of college or university administrators, including deans, assistant deans, and department chairs, who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and dedication to advancing the field of nursing education.

Core Criteria:

1. **Innovative Leadership:** Demonstrates exceptional leadership skills by implementing innovative strategies and practices that enhance nursing education and student outcomes within the college or university setting.
2. **Mentorship and Development:** Actively mentors and supports the professional development of nursing faculty fosters a culture of continuous learning and growth.
3. **Academic Contributions:** Makes significant contributions to the field of nursing through research, publications, and presentations that advance nursing knowledge and practice.
4. **Student Support:** Provides outstanding support and advocacy for nursing students, including academic advising, career guidance, and creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Excellence in Undergraduate Nursing Education Award

Description: This award celebrates the extraordinary dedication and contributions of an undergraduate nursing professor who has demonstrated excellence in teaching, mentorship, and innovative pedagogical approaches.

Core Criteria:

1. **Innovative Teaching Methods:** Utilizes creative and effective teaching strategies that enhance student learning and engagement, incorporating the latest educational technologies and evidence-based practices.
2. **Student Mentorship and Support:** Provides exceptional mentorship and support to undergraduate nursing students, fostering their academic and professional growth, and creating a positive and inclusive learning environment.
3. **Curriculum Development:** Contributes significantly to the development and improvement of the undergraduate nursing curriculum, ensuring it meets current healthcare standards and prepares students for successful nursing careers.
4. **Professional Development and Scholarship:** Actively engages in professional development and scholarly activities, such as attending conferences, publishing research, and participating in professional organizations, to stay current in the field and bring new knowledge to the classroom.

Excellence in Graduate Nursing Education Award

Description: This award honors the outstanding dedication and contributions of a graduate nursing professor who has demonstrated excellence in teaching, mentorship, and advancing research in the field of nursing.

Core Criteria:

1. **Innovative Teaching Methods:** Utilizes creative and effective teaching strategies that enhance student learning and engagement, incorporating the latest educational technologies and evidence-based practices.
2. **Student Mentorship and Support:** Provides exceptional mentorship and support to graduate nursing students, fostering their academic and professional growth, and creating a positive and inclusive learning environment.
3. **Curriculum Development:** Contributes significantly to the development and improvement of the graduate nursing curriculum, ensuring it meets current healthcare standards and prepares students for successful nursing careers.
4. **Professional Development and Scholarship:** Actively engages in professional development and scholarly activities, such as attending conferences, publishing research, and participating in professional organizations, to stay current in the field and bring new knowledge to the classroom.

Innovative Technology Impact Award

Description: This award recognizes a college or university professor who demonstrates exceptional creativity and dedication in integrating innovative technologies to create effective and engaging learning experiences that enhance student understanding and acclimates students to new technologies.

Core Criteria:

1. **Creative Instructional Techniques:** Demonstrates exceptional use of cutting-edge technologies, such as AI, virtual simulations, or digital tools, to create engaging and effective learning experiences in the classroom or clinical settings.
2. **Student Acclimation to Technology:** Effectively prepares students to use new technologies in their future nursing practice, ensuring they are proficient and confident in applying these tools to improve patient care and nursing outcomes.
3. **Impact on Nursing Education:** Shows significant improvements in nursing education outcomes, such as enhanced student performance, increased engagement, or better preparedness for clinical practice, as a result of integrating advanced technologies.
4. **Contribution to the Nursing Profession:** Actively shares knowledge and best practices related to the use of new technologies in nursing education through publications, presentations, or professional development activities, contributing to the advancement of the nursing profession.

Rising Star: Nursing Student Excellence Award

Description: This award celebrates a college or undergraduate nursing student who demonstrates outstanding academic and clinical performance, a keen interest in research, and a profound passion for the nursing profession.

Core Criteria:

1. **Academic Excellence:** Demonstrates outstanding academic performance in nursing coursework, consistently achieving high grades and showing a deep understanding of nursing concepts and principles.
2. **Clinical Proficiency:** Excels in clinical placements, showcasing exceptional practical skills, professionalism, and the ability to provide high-quality patient care in various healthcare settings.
3. **Research Interest:** Displays a strong interest in advancing nursing knowledge through research and contributing to evidence-based practice.
4. **Passion for Nursing:** Exhibits a genuine passion for the nursing profession, demonstrated through involvement in nursing organizations, community service, and a commitment to lifelong learning and professional development.

Future Clinical Leader: Graduate Nursing Student Award

Description: This award honors a graduate nursing student who demonstrates exceptional academic excellence, actively engages in research and innovation, exhibits strong leadership qualities, and advocates for healthcare policies and reforms.

Core Criteria:

1. **Academic Excellence:** Demonstrates outstanding academic performance, maintaining a high GPA throughout their graduate studies. This criterion highlights the student's dedication to their coursework and mastery of nursing knowledge.
2. **Research and Innovation:** Engages in research activities and contributes to the advancement of nursing knowledge. This could include publishing research papers, presenting at conferences, or developing innovative solutions to healthcare challenges.
3. **Leadership and Professionalism:** Shows strong leadership qualities and professionalism in all interactions. This could involve taking initiative in clinical settings, participating in nursing organizations, mentoring peers, and demonstrating ethical behavior and integrity.
4. **Advocacy and Policy Leadership:** Demonstrates a proactive role in advocating for healthcare policies and reforms that improve patient care and the nursing profession. This includes participating in policy-making processes, engaging with legislators, and leading initiatives that address healthcare disparities and promote health equity.

Visionary Leader: Chief Nursing Officer Award or Chief Nursing Executive Award

Description: This awards recognizes a chief nursing administrator at a healthcare system who exemplifies exceptional leadership, fosters strong interdisciplinary teamwork, employs innovative practices, and exhibits outstanding leadership during challenging times.

Core Criteria:

1. **Strategic Vision and Implementation:** Demonstrates a clear strategic vision for improving healthcare systems and successfully implements initiatives that enhance patient care, operational efficiency, and overall system performance.
2. **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Fosters strong interdisciplinary collaboration and teamwork across various healthcare departments and professionals, leading to integrated and holistic patient care.
3. **Quality Improvement and Innovation:** Leads quality improvement projects and innovative practices that result in measurable improvements in patient outcomes, safety, and satisfaction within the healthcare system.
4. **Leadership in Crisis Management:** Exhibits exceptional leadership during crises, such as public health emergencies or organizational challenges, ensuring effective response, resource management, and support for staff and patients.

Champions of the Unit: Nurse Leader Recognition Award

Description: This award celebrates a nurse leader (i.e., nurse manager, charge nurse, or team leader) who demonstrates exceptional operational excellence, outstanding team leadership and development, a strong commitment to patient-centered care, and exemplary management skills in addressing and resolving clinical challenges.

Core Criteria:

1. **Operational Excellence:** Demonstrates outstanding management of clinical operations, ensuring efficient workflow, optimal resource utilization, and high standards of patient care within the unit.
2. **Team Leadership and Development:** Provides exceptional leadership and support to nursing staff, fostering a positive work environment, promoting professional development, and encouraging teamwork and collaboration.
3. **Patient-Centered Care:** Champions patient-centered care by implementing best practices, advocating for patient needs, and ensuring that patient safety and satisfaction are top priorities.
4. **Crisis Management and Problem-Solving:** Exhibits strong crisis management skills, effectively addressing and resolving issues that arise in the clinical setting, and maintaining calm and order during high-pressure situations.

Heart of Healthcare: Registered Nurse Award

Description: This award honors a registered nurse who demonstrates high-quality care, advocates for patients and the community, exhibits professionalism and ethical standards, and shows a passion for quality improvement.

Core Criteria:

1. **Expert Knowledge in Nursing Practice:** Demonstrates a deep and comprehensive understanding of nursing practice, consistently applying evidence-based knowledge to deliver high-quality patient care and improve clinical outcomes.
2. **Advocacy for Patients and Community:** Actively advocates for the rights and well-being of patients and the broader community, ensuring that their needs are met and their voices are heard in healthcare decisions.
3. **Professionalism and Ethical Practice:** Exhibits the highest standards of professionalism and ethical behavior, serving as a role model for colleagues and maintaining a commitment to continuous professional development.
4. **Commitment to Quality Improvement:** Leads and participates in quality improvement initiatives, identifying areas for enhancement in clinical practice and implementing strategies to achieve better patient care and safety.

Innovative Advanced Practice Nurse Award

Description: This award recognizes an advanced practice nurse who displays exceptional clinical expertise and excellence, demonstrates strong leadership and advocacy, fosters interprofessional collaboration, and shows a deep commitment to education and mentorship.

Core Criteria:

1. **Clinical Expertise and Excellence:** Demonstrates advanced clinical skills and knowledge, providing high-quality, evidence-based care that significantly improves patient outcomes and sets a standard of excellence in practice.
2. **Leadership and Advocacy:** Exhibits strong leadership abilities and advocates for patients, healthcare policies, and the nursing profession, influencing positive changes within the healthcare system.
3. **Interprofessional Collaboration:** Effectively collaborates with other healthcare professionals to deliver comprehensive, patient-centered care, fostering a team-based approach to healthcare delivery.
4. **Commitment to Education and Mentorship:** Actively engages in the education and mentorship of nursing students, peers, and other healthcare professionals, promoting continuous learning and professional development.

Nursing Technology Champion Award

Description: This award celebrates a registered nurse working in a healthcare setting who integrates innovative technologies to enhance patient care, demonstrates leadership in adoption of new technologies, and contributes to nursing knowledge on the use of said technologies.

Core Criteria:

1. **Innovative Technology Integration:** Demonstrates exceptional skill in integrating AI or other advanced technologies into nursing practice, leading to significant improvements in patient care, workflow efficiency, or clinical outcomes.
2. **Positive Patient Impact:** Shows clear evidence of how the implemented technologies have enhanced patient care, safety, or satisfaction, resulting in measurable improvements in health outcomes or patient experiences.
3. **Leadership in Technological Adoption:** Exhibits strong leadership in advocating for and guiding the adoption of new technologies within the nursing team or healthcare organization, including training and supporting colleagues in their use.
4. **Contribution to Nursing Knowledge:** Contributes to the body of nursing knowledge by sharing insights, best practices, or research findings related to the use of AI or other technologies, through publications, presentations, or educational initiatives.

Community Nurse Warrior Award

Description: This award honors a registered nurse who champions community initiatives that address the needs of vulnerable or underserved populations, advocates for health equity and improved access to care, and shows strong leadership in coordinating community health projects that empower communities.

Core Criteria:

1. **Community Engagement and Outreach:** Actively participates in and leads community health initiatives, outreach programs, and public health campaigns that address the needs of underserved populations and promote overall community well-being.
2. **Advocacy and Policy Influence:** Demonstrates a strong commitment to advocating for health equity and social justice, influencing healthcare policies and practices to improve access to care and address health disparities within the community.
3. **Leadership in Community Health:** Exhibits exceptional leadership in organizing and coordinating community health projects, mobilizing resources, and collaborating with community organizations to achieve impactful health outcomes.
4. **Education and Empowerment:** Provides education and resources to community members, empowering them with knowledge and skills to take control of their health and well-being, and fostering a culture of health literacy and self-advocacy.

Nomination Form

Instructions for Submitting a Nomination:

1. Introduce the nominee by name and the name of the award plus a photo.
2. State how long you have known the candidate and discuss the nature of your relationship.
3. Address the **core criteria** of the award as listed in the 2026 FNA’s South Region Nomination Packet.
4. Clearly list your nominee's achievements **as related to the core criteria** of the award.
5. **Be descriptive and give specific examples** of how the nominee meets the criteria. Avoid vague statements.
6. Include a **strong concluding statement summarizing** the individual’s qualification for the award.

Award:

- Distinguished Academic Nurse Leader Award
- Excellence in Undergraduate Nursing Education Award
- Excellence In Graduate Nursing Education Award
- Innovative Technology Impact Award
- Rising Star: Nursing Student Excellence Award
- Future Clinical Leader: Graduate Nursing Student Award
- Visionary Leader: Chief Nursing Officer or Chief Nurse Executive Award
- Champions of the Unit: Nurse Leader Recognition Award
- Heart of Healthcare: Registered Nurse Award
- Innovative Advanced Practice Nurse Award
- Nursing Technology Champion Award
- Community Nurse Warrior Award

The Nominee:

Name	Credentials	
Street	City/State	Zip
Email	Daytime Phone	

Nominated by:

Name	Credentials	
Street	City/State	Zip
Email	Daytime Phone	

Letter of Recommendation Form #1

Name of Nominee: _____

Person Writing Recommendation: _____

Describe your relationship to the nominee: _____

Letter of recommendation must be submitted as a separate Word document. Please be sure to describe how the nominee meets the **core criteria** of the award (give specific examples). Please refer to the Awards Manual for suggestions on how to write an effective letter of recommendation.

Letter of Recommendation Form #2

Name of Nominee: _____

Person Writing Recommendation: _____

Describe your relationship to the nominee: _____

Letter of recommendation must be submitted as a separate Word document. Please be sure to describe how the nominee meets the **core criteria** of the award (give specific examples). Please refer to the Awards Manual for suggestions on how to write an effective letter of recommendation.

Submission Checklist of Required Items:

- Nomination Form
- Recommendation Letter 1
- Recommendation Letter 2
- Photo of Nominee

Please submit completed packet to:

All nomination packets must be emailed to Dr. Alina Diaz-Cruz, Chair of Awards Committee at:
fnasouthawards@gmail.com.

Nomination Deadline:

The deadline for submitting nominations for the 16th Annual Symposium and Awards Ceremony is **April 3, 2026**. It is important that the nomination awards packet includes all information as specified in the General Procedures section of this manual.

Awards Ceremony

Award winners will be honored at the **16th Annual South Region Symposium and Awards Ceremony**. The breakfast and lunch will take place on **Saturday, April 18** from **8:00am to 2:30pm**.

All award winners and nominees will receive recognition at this prestigious event that hundreds of nurses attend each year!

Save the Date & Register to Attend:

2026 FNA's South Region Symposium and Awards Ceremony

Saturday, April 18, 2026

8:00am - 2:30pm EST

Gulfstream Park – Sport of Kings Theater

RSVP: Please register by **April 13, 2026**, by visiting:

<https://www.floridanurse.org/event/SouthSymposium2026>