

ACHD 74TH ANNUAL MEETING



2026 ACHD AWARDS CEREMONY

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2026

5:30-6:45 PM

Ferrantes Bayview, Monterey Marriott



ACHD
ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
HEALTHCARE DISTRICTS

ACHD is pleased to continue our tradition of honoring the hard work of healthcare districts, CEOs and Trustees and their significant achievements in governance, strategic planning and partnership, stakeholder relationships, leadership and finance.



ACHD
ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
HEALTHCARE DISTRICTS

1127 11th Street Suite 905

Sacramento, CA

916-266-5200

ACHD.ORG ▶ INFO@ACHD.ORG



AWARDS SUMMARY AND CRITERIA

TRUSTEE OF THE YEAR

Recognizes a Healthcare District Trustee who has notably impacted their healthcare district by taking significant steps to deliver outstanding governance, strategic planning and partnership with constituents. Nominees must meet the following minimum criteria:

- A member of ACHD
- Nominated by a Trustee or Executive of a district
- The Trustee has positive news articles related to their achievements
- Attend the 2026 Annual Meeting to be honored as a nominee

CEO OF THE YEAR

Recognizes a Healthcare District CEO whose leadership, efforts and achievements have resulted in a positive benefit to their District and community. Nominees must meet the following minimum criteria:

- A member of ACHD
- Nominated by a Trustee or Executive of a district
- The CEO has positive news articles related to their achievements
- Attend the 2026 Annual Meeting to be honored as a nominee

DISTRICT OF THE YEAR

Honors a Healthcare District that has identified one or more initiatives implemented to improve the health and well-being of District residents. Nominees must meet the following minimum criteria:

- ACHD Certified Healthcare District, or in the process of becoming Certified, at the time of submission
- A member of ACHD
- Nominated by a Trustee or Executive of a district
- The district achieved positive results to improve the wellness of their community with their initiative
- Attend the 2026 Annual Meeting to be honored as a nominee

2026 TRUSTEE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



ABDALLAH FARRUKH, M.D.

Antelope Valley Healthcare District

Antelope Valley Healthcare District proudly nominates Abdallah Farrukh, M.D. for ACHD Trustee of the Year Award. A dedicated member of the Board of Directors for more than 26

years, Dr. Farrukh has provided visionary leadership while serving as Treasurer and has been instrumental in advancing the district's mission of delivering exceptional healthcare to the Antelope Valley community.

Throughout his tenure, Dr. Farrukh has championed initiatives that have transformed healthcare access throughout the Antelope Valley. His leadership has supported the expansion of the Women's & Infants Pavilion, advanced stroke and cardiovascular programs, emergency department growth, rehabilitation services, pediatric critical care, and the adoption of innovative technologies that allow patients to receive high-quality, specialized care close to home. He continues to help guide the district's future through the development of a new outpatient surgery center and other strategic initiatives that will serve the community for years to come.

Dr. Farrukh's unwavering commitment to excellence, collaborative leadership, and dedication to improving healthcare for the residents of the Antelope Valley make him an exceptional nominee for the ACHD Trustee of the Year Award.

2026 TRUSTEE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



ED HERNANDEZ

Eden Health District

Eden Health District proudly nominates Ed Hernandez for the ACHD Trustee of the Year Award. As Chair of the Board for the past four years, Ed has provided visionary leadership that has strengthened the district's financial stability, expanded

community partnerships, and improved access to healthcare for the residents of the Eden Health District.

Drawing on his extensive background in finance, Ed has guided the district through several transformational milestones. Most notably, he played a key role in building the public, private, and community partnerships that helped save St. Rose Hospital, a vital safety-net hospital serving thousands of low-income residents in Hayward. His financial expertise also helped the district invest nearly \$2 million toward the hospital's new cardiac catheterization laboratory and expanded sub-acute care services, ensuring residents continue to receive critical care close to home.

Ed is known for his visionary leadership, attention to detail, and unwavering commitment to the community. Under his leadership, the district successfully transitioned to district-based elections, generating approximately \$1.5 million in savings that allowed for a significant expansion of its community grants program. These investments now support dozens of nonprofit organizations providing essential mental health, housing, senior, and food assistance services throughout the district.

2026 TRUSTEE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



GRAIG STEPHENS

Soledad Community Health Care District

Soledad Community Health Care District proudly nominates Graig Stephens for the ACHD Trustee of the Year Award. As Board President for the past 16 years, Graig has demonstrated an unwavering commitment

to improving healthcare access and strengthening the South Monterey County community through thoughtful leadership, collaboration, and public service.

A retired educator, volunteer firefighter, former Soledad Mayor and City Council member, and longtime community leader, Graig has dedicated his life to serving others. His diverse experience has shaped his belief that healthy communities are built through strong partnerships among healthcare, education, emergency services, and local government. Throughout his tenure, he has fostered collaboration across these sectors, helping establish a community-wide emergency preparedness committee that continues to enhance public safety and resilience.

Graig has also been a passionate advocate for expanding healthcare services in rural communities. His leadership was instrumental in the development of the Soledad Community Health Care District's Women's Health Center, bringing mammography and comprehensive obstetrical and gynecological services closer to home for women throughout the region. In addition, his service on the Monterey County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) has strengthened regional partnerships while bringing valuable insight and collaboration back to the district. Graig's vision, leadership, and lifelong commitment to the residents of South Monterey County make him an exceptional nominee for the ACHD Trustee of the Year Award.

2026 TRUSTEE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



JEAN TURNER

Northern Inyo Healthcare District

Northern Inyo Healthcare District proudly nominates Jean Turner for the ACHD Trustee of the Year Award. During her eight years of service on the Board of Directors, Jean has demonstrated exceptional leadership, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to strengthening

healthcare for the Eastern Sierra community. Her thoughtful guidance has helped the district plan for long-term success while earning the trust and confidence of both the Board and the community.

Jean's leadership has been especially impactful during a period of significant organizational transition. She skillfully guided the district through complex community relations challenges, led the Board through labor contract negotiations, and played a key role in the successful recruitment of a new Chief Executive Officer. Her steady leadership ensured the organization remained focused on its mission while maintaining operational stability and preserving public trust.

Committed to continuous improvement, Jean has also strengthened the district through enhanced advocacy efforts and important governance initiatives. By leading updates to Board policies and procedures, she has improved accountability, clarified governance practices, and reinforced the Board's ability to make informed strategic decisions. Her collaborative approach and dedication to effective leadership have created a stronger foundation for the future of Northern Inyo Healthcare District.

Jean Turner's vision, professionalism, and steadfast commitment to public service have made a lasting impact on the district and the communities it serves, making her an outstanding nominee for the ACHD Trustee of the Year Award.

2026 TRUSTEE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



KRISTINA HONG, NP

Antelope Valley Healthcare District

Antelope Valley Healthcare District proudly nominates Kristina Hong, NP for the ACHD Trustee of the Year Award. As Board Chair and a dedicated trustee for the past 10 years, Kristina has combined clinical expertise with visionary leadership to strengthen patient care, advance healthcare access, and support

the long-term success of Antelope Valley Medical Center and the community it serves.

A nurse practitioner with nearly two decades of service at Antelope Valley Medical Center, Kristina began her career as an emergency department registered nurse and remained committed to improving patient outcomes through compassionate care and innovative leadership. Her frontline experience has provided valuable insight in guiding Board decisions, developing nursing policies, and supporting initiatives that enhance the quality, efficiency, and accessibility of healthcare services.

Throughout her tenure, Kristina has played an integral role in several transformational projects, including the hospital's rebranding initiative and the expansion of the Emergency Department. She has also supported the development of new specialty programs and advanced technologies that continue to improve care for patients throughout the Antelope Valley. Beyond the hospital, her service as a pediatric liaison nurse, emergency medical services coordinator, and fire department nurse educator reflects her enduring commitment to community health, emergency preparedness, and public service.

Kristina Hong's compassionate leadership, clinical excellence, and dedication to advancing healthcare have made a lasting impact on Antelope Valley Healthcare District and the communities it serves, making her an exceptional nominee for the ACHD Trustee of the Year Award.

2026 CEO OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



STACEY KUZAK

John C. Fremont Healthcare District

John C. Fremont Healthcare District proudly nominates Stacey Kuzak for the ACHD CEO of the Year Award. Although Stacey has served as Chief Executive Officer for only a short time, her leadership has already

transformed the organization through a renewed focus on collaboration, transparency, accountability, and patient-centered care. Stepping into a district facing significant operational, financial, and organizational challenges, she quickly established a clear vision that has restored confidence among employees, the Board, and the community.

Stacey believes exceptional healthcare begins with empowered people. She strengthened the executive leadership team, improved financial oversight, fostered stronger labor-management relationships, and implemented initiatives that promote employee engagement, professional development, and a culture of shared accountability. Her commitment to transparency has also strengthened community trust through regular town hall meetings, open communication, and meaningful public engagement.

Under Stacey's leadership, the district has made measurable progress toward financial stability and operational excellence. She has improved revenue cycle management, enhanced governance practices, expanded access to primary care by reopening a rural clinic, and engaged the community in planning for the district's future. Her hands-on leadership, dedication to patients, and collaborative approach have positioned John C. Fremont Healthcare District for long-term success while restoring optimism throughout the organization.

2026 CEO OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



DR. KARIN FREESE

Del Puerto Health Care District

Del Puerto Health Care District proudly nominates Dr. Karin Freese for the ACHD CEO of the Year Award. During her 10 years as Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Freese has provided visionary leadership that has transformed the district into a thriving, forward-

looking healthcare organization dedicated to expanding access, strengthening community partnerships, and improving the health of the Patterson region.

Throughout her tenure, Dr. Freese has expanded healthcare services by increasing the number of providers, extending clinic hours, enhancing behavioral health resources, and developing innovative community outreach initiatives, including diabetes screenings, free sports physicals, and partnerships that inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals. Her collaborative leadership and unwavering commitment to the community have significantly increased access to quality care while fostering meaningful engagement throughout the district.

Dr. Freese's most transformative achievement is her vision for a new 27-acre healthcare campus that will reshape healthcare delivery across the west side of Stanislaus County. Through her leadership, the district secured a \$27 million state grant for behavioral health services, completed the campus master plan, and advanced legislation supporting a Rural Emergency Stabilization Care Unit (RESCU) to expand emergency care access before the full campus is complete. Her strategic leadership has also strengthened the district's financial position while laying the foundation for generations of improved healthcare services.

2026 DISTRICT OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



EDEN HEALTH DISTRICT

Eden Health District is proudly nominated for the ACHD District of the Year Award in recognition of its extraordinary leadership, innovation, and commitment to protecting healthcare access for the communities it serves. Through a collaborative, community-driven effort, the district led the successful initiative to preserve St. Rose Hospital in Hayward, ensuring that this vital safety-net hospital continues providing care to more than 30,000 low-income patients each year.

Recognizing the urgent need to address the hospital's financial challenges, Eden Health District brought together an unprecedented coalition of healthcare organizations, local and regional government leaders, elected officials, community partners, and residents to develop a sustainable path forward. By providing seed funding and coordinating this collaborative effort, the district helped secure new partnerships and long-term operational support that have stabilized the hospital and strengthened access to essential healthcare services throughout the region.

Eden Health District's leadership extends beyond this landmark achievement. The district has strengthened its own financial future, expanded support for community health programs, and earned a reputation as an innovative leader through public health education, regional collaboration, and strategic investment. Its work demonstrates how healthcare districts can successfully unite diverse partners around a common purpose to preserve vital community resources and improve the health of those they serve.

2026 DISTRICT OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



SoHum Health

SOUTHERN HUMBOLDT COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE DISTRICT

Southern Humboldt Community Healthcare District is proudly nominated for the ACHD District of the Year Award in recognition of its innovative approach to expanding healthcare access and strengthening the long-term sustainability of rural healthcare. Serving an isolated 800-square-mile region where residents often travel nearly an hour to reach care, the district has transformed community health by developing new services that meet critical local needs while creating lasting financial stability.

Over the past five years, Southern Humboldt Community Healthcare District has successfully launched a community pharmacy, mobile optometry clinic, MRI services, and an innovative Chronic Care Management program to address longstanding gaps in healthcare access. When the community's only pharmacy and optometry practice closed, the district responded quickly by establishing replacement services, ensuring residents could once again receive medications, vision care, and advanced diagnostic imaging close to home. The district continues to expand these efforts through school-based vision screenings and partnerships that improve care for underserved populations.

Working closely with local schools, community organizations, healthcare partners, and residents, the district has built a collaborative model that responds directly to community needs while generating new revenue streams to sustain future growth. These efforts have enabled Southern Humboldt Community Healthcare District to expand services, increase employment, and strengthen its financial position despite the significant challenges facing rural healthcare providers.

Thank You!

A big Thank You to our Independent Panel of Judges:

Aaron Avery, California Special Districts Association

Larry Walker, The Walker Company

Gail Blanchard-Saiger, BLANCHARD SAIGER LAW, P.C.



ACHD

ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
HEALTHCARE DISTRICTS

ALL HANDS ON DECK

NETWORKING CHALLENGE

WHEN:

Thursday, October 8, 5:30-6:45 pm, before Awards Reception

HOW TO PLAY:

Set your course for an evening of networking, discovery, and a little friendly competition! This isn't just another networking activity, it's your chance to chart new connections while exploring ACHD through a mix of committee and sponsor meet-and-greets, nautical trivia, movie quotes, and Monterey fun facts.

YOUR MISSION:

Navigate the room and introduce yourself to fellow attendees.

Complete each bingo square by either:

- ▶ Finding the designated ACHD committee member, Board member, sponsor, or Certified District representative, **or**,
- ▶ Finding someone who knows the answer to one of the themed trivia questions.

Write the name of the person you met in each square, along with the requested answer when applicable.

Each square must represent a **unique conversation**—no doubling up! (*For example, you cannot check all of the bronze sponsor boxes with one bronze sponsor encounter*). Your goal is to chart at least one **BINGO** before the Awards Reception begins!

GOAL:

Build new relationships, strengthen existing connections, and learn more about California's healthcare districts—all while embracing this year's theme, **Navigating the Changing Tide: Leading Healthcare Districts Forward**.

PRIZES:

Complete one **BINGO** (one full row, column, or diagonal) and you'll receive **one additional raffle ticket** for our prize drawing following the Awards Reception. **The more Bingos you complete, the more entries you'll earn**—so keep networking and keep charting your course!

NAVIGATING THE CHANGING TIDES: BINGO CARD

LOCATE AN ACHD GOLD SPONSOR Name of Person You Met: Name of Sponsor:	FIND SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHICH MOVIE THIS FAMOUS QUOTE COMES FROM: <i>"We're gonna need a bigger boat."</i> Name of Person You Met: Movie:	LOCATE A MEMBER OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE Name of Person You Met: Healthcare District:	FIND SOMEONE WHO KNOWS THE NAME OF MONTEREY'S FAMOUS WATERFRONT STREET LINED WITH RESTAURANTS AND SHOPS. Name of Person You Met: Answer:
LOCATE AN ACHD BRONZE SPONSOR Name of Person You Met: Name of Sponsor:	FIND SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHAT SAILORS TRADITIONALLY CALL THE LEFT SIDE OF A BOAT. Name of Person You Met: Answer:	LOCATE A MEMBER OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE Name of Person You Met: Healthcare District:	WHICH PIRATE FAMOUSLY SAID, "BUT WHY IS THE RUM GONE?" Name of Person You Met: Answer:
LOCATE A MEMBER OF THE ACHD BOARD Name of Person You Met: Healthcare District:	LOCATE A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE Name of Person You Met: Healthcare District:	FIND SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHAT SAILORS CALL THE STEERING WHEEL OF A SHIP. Name of Person You Met: Answer:	FIND SOMEONE WHO HAS TAKEN A CRUISE OR SAILED ON THE OCEAN. Name of Person You Met: Destination:
LOCATE AN ACHD CERTIFIED DISTRICT MEMBER Name of Person You Met: Healthcare District:	WHICH FAMOUS NOVELIST MADE CANNERY ROW FAMOUS? Name of Person You Met: Answer:	LOCATE A MEMBER OF THE ADVOCACY COMMITTEE Name of Person You Met: Healthcare District:	FIND SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHICH DISNEY MOVIE FEATURES THE SONG "HOW FAR I'LL GO." Name of Person You Met: Movie:



ACHD

ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
HEALTHCARE DISTRICTS

1127 11th Street Suite 905
Sacramento, CA
916-266-5200
ACHD.ORG ► INFO@ACHD.ORG

