

CHIA 2025 Recognition Awards

Distinguished Member



Maria Hewett,
MBA, RHIA

Educator



Alejandro "Alex" Ortiz,
MS-HCM, RHIA, CHPS

Mentor



Shirley Lewis,
DPA, RHIA, CCS,
CPHQ, CHC

Volunteer



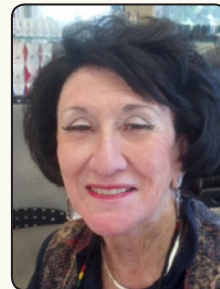
Lynda A. Russell,
EdD, JD, RHIA, CHP

Rising Star



Courtney Hoatson,
RHIA, CDIP, CCS

HIM Industry Champion



Rhonda L. Anderson,
RHIA

HONORING MEMBER EXCELLENCE

2025 CHIA Recognition and Student Scholarship Award Recipients

The CHIA Recognition Awards are designed to encourage, nurture, and celebrate exceptional volunteerism and professional leadership within California's health information community. The CHIA Board of Directors and the CHIA Awards and Scholarship Committee are pleased to congratulate the recipients of the 2025 CHIA Recognition Awards. These awards are presented during CHIACON25.

DISTINGUISHED MEMBER

The CHIA Distinguished Member Award is CHIA's highest award and honors a member who has shown exemplary leadership within the association and has made outstanding contributions to the health information profession.

Maria L. Hewett, RHIA, MBA has been in the HIM profession for 40 years. Throughout her esteemed career, Maria has served as a leader, an advocate, a mentor, an educator, and a volunteer in the health information associations of Nebraska, Ohio, and California. Her dedication to CHIA includes her Component Association, *San Diego HIA* as well as *AHIMA*, and the *American Public Health Association (APHA)*. Maria held Board of Director positions with CHIA and SCHIA. Her service on committees includes *AHIMA*, *CHIA*, *SCHIA*, and other professional associations. In addition, Maria Hewett is known for her enthusiastic ability to share her vast knowledge and experience at conventions, seminars, and within her community.

Because of Maria's broad work experience and successful mentoring of many students and peers, she has become California's 'go-to person' for HIE knowledge and experience. In retirement, she continues to contribute to our profession by publishing and speaking at *APHA*, regarding Patient Matching and Hispanic Naming Conventions. Vivian Thomas summarized Maria's career perfectly - "With a zeal to encourage HI professional growth and equip professionals in a changing industry, Maria stimulates inclusive participation across the broad range of CHIA domains. Maria's passion and excellence as a leader has advanced the profession, while mentoring those expanding their HIM careers."

Congratulations Maria, our 2025 CHIA Distinguished Health Information Professional.

EDUCATOR

The CHIA Educator Award honors those who demonstrate excellence in preparing the next generation of professionals for careers in the health information profession, that is dependent upon a continual influx of well-trained new talent.

Alejandro Ortiz, MS-HCM, RHIA, CHPS has been an adjunct faculty member at *East Los Angeles College (ELAC)* for the past 13 years and serves as the HIM Director at *San Gabriel Valley Medical Center*.

Alex's role in teaching the *Professional Practice Experience* course continues to provide valuable hands-on experience for students through a real-life series of discipline and detail-oriented tasks. Alex possesses strong interpersonal and communication skills that contribute to his HIT students' learning, providing a vast array of resources and services. His consistent and positive attitude brings an air of calm confidence which enables him to comfortably interface with students and professors. At *ELAC* and *San Gabriel Valley Medical Center* he has mentored and placed multiple students in jobs in the field of health information management.

Because Alex effectively shares his knowledge and experience with students, learning about HIT concepts and operations is relevant and meaningful. In addition to his dedication to education, Alex shares his leadership skills in his various volunteer responsibilities for his Component Association and CHIA. Mr. Ortiz always displays professionalism, compassion, and inspiration to new, current and former students. Congratulations Alex, a well-deserved recipient of our 2025 CHIA Educator Award.

MENTOR

The CHIA Mentor Award honors a member that has demonstrated excellence in mentoring and encouraging colleagues or students to realize their full potential or has helped them find ways to achieve their best.

Shirley Lewis, DPA, MHA, RHIA, CCS, CPHQ, CHC has exemplified the true meaning of mentorship over the course of her esteemed career. Shirley's career in the health information field includes her service as an HIM director, a consultant, an educator, an advisor, the 2014-15 CHIA President, and a multitude of CHIA committee chair positions. Regardless of her role, Shirley always demonstrates her dedication to our profession through a commitment to guiding others.

Ms. Lewis has shared her valuable experience as a senior consultant for a major HIM vendor, as a Privacy Compliance Officer, an Associate Dean and adjunct professor for two HIM programs. And she is the President/Owner of a physician billing/coding business.

Shirley's enthusiasm and passion for the health information field continues to inspire and motivate her students, mentees, peers and CHIA colleagues alike. She remains a strong advocate for professional involvement by encouraging personal engagement with CHIA and AHIMA endeavors. She believes wholeheartedly that these are valuable opportunities for knowledge sharing and networking.

Because Shirley eagerly shares her expertise and guidance with mentees, she maintains many long-term relationships with her students, providing support as a trusted life-long resource. Congratulations Shirley, our 2025 CHIA Mentor Award recipient.

HIM INDUSTRY CHAMPION

The CHIA HIM Industry Champion Award recognizes those who have worked tirelessly to support the health information profession by advancing CHIA's leadership position. The recipients of this award may be individuals, organizations, or companies that have worked with CHIA in supporting key initiatives by promoting the interests of the health information profession.

Rhonda L. Anderson, RHIA, has been a champion for HIM for over 50 years and continues to be engaged in her beloved profession. Rhonda is always at the forefront of legislative change and initiatives and is a known *Subject Matter Expert* (SME) in the alternative care setting, and a CHIA Proud Past President.

Ms. Anderson is a valued resource for *AHIMA* and *CHIA*, speaking at a variety of conferences and educational sessions during her career. Rhonda graciously sponsors and provides financial support for CHIA at conventions and other events. Her extensive expertise in the areas of Health Information Management Regulatory requirements, Quality Assessment Assurance and Performance Improvement Implementation, ICD Coding, Clinical Documentation Integrity (CDI), Physician's fee for billing and HIPAA Privacy and Security has provided valuable expertise to CHIA members. In addition, Rhonda has been a creative force for education in the effective use of long-term care's electronic health record, quality management and ongoing compliance.

Clearly an advocate for *AHIMA*, *CHIA* and health information professionals everywhere, Rhonda Anderson is a mentor, leader, and a business owner who gives back and displays well, our 2025 CHIA HIM Industry Champion.

VOLUNTEER

The Volunteer Award honors members who have served consistently as exemplary volunteers supporting the mission of CHIA. Candidates should have exceptional and consistent (minimum of three years) service that has contributed to the advancement of the profession.

Lynda A. Russell, EdD, JD, RHIA (Retired), CHP, has a long history of volunteerism: a Proud Past President, 2005-06, Board of Directors member, Chair and member of several *CHIA* committees, and as an active member in her Component Association. Even though Ms. Russell has been retired for a few years, she remains engaged with *CHIA* as an active *CHIA Professional Emeritus* member recently contributing to the Bylaws Committee work and the Proud Past Presidents (PPPs) group initiatives.

Lynda has been instrumental in the transition away from the *House of Delegates* and the efforts to revise the Bylaws. She dedicated her time and expertise to assisting the *CHIA Bylaws Committee* in implementing these important changes. She conducted multiple reviews of the proposed amendments and helped compile the final document into the well-organized package that was delivered to the Board and ultimately the HOD who approved the major revisions to the Bylaws and subsequently approved by *AHIMA*.

Her volunteering approach combines leadership, mentoring, and education, making a positive impact on everyone with whom she collaborates. Ms. Russell is an engaging speaker who is easy to understand, providing insightful perspectives. Congratulations Lynda. You represent what our 2025 CHIA Volunteer Award means.

RISING STAR

CHIA's Rising Star Award recognizes and encourages the best of the fresh new talent being trained in health information administration or health information technology degree granting programs. It honors a gifted student or promising emerging professional who inspires hope for the future of health information profession.

Courtney Hoatson, RHIA, CDIP, CCS, CRC, received her Bachelor of Science in Health Information Management at *Loma Linda University*. Since then, she obtained her RHIA, CDIP, CCS, and CRC, demonstrating her commitment to the profession through her

impressive leadership skills and developing organizational and problem-solving abilities. Using her innate ability for global thinking, Courtney stepped up to analyze DRGs, CDI, coding, and revenue cycle implications, which lead to developing training models for both coders and CDI specialists.

Courtney is currently partnering with Roberta Baranda in the *AHIMA M2M Mentorship Program*. She is co-writing an article for *AHIMA* on mentorship and continues to assist CHIA through valued volunteerism on select CHIA committees. Her work with CHIA includes volunteering at CHIACON24 where she is most proud of assisting in the value of membership video.

Courtney is currently working as an Outpatient Clinical Documentation Specialist for Norwood. As she continues her professional journey to research, gain knowledge, and network with other HI professionals, Courtney remains enthusiastic, innovative, and a global thinker. Congratulations to our 2025 CHIA Rising Star.

CHIA SCHOLARSHIPS

Student Scholarships are awarded to CHIA Emerging Professional (Student) members to assist in completing their educational goals in CAHIIM-accredited health information administration (HIA) or health information technology (HIT) programs.

Halina Delgadillo is a student from *San Diego Mesa College* pursuing a bachelor's degree in HIM, while simultaneously working in the HIM field. Halina is seeking a high career goal of becoming a supervisor where she can use and share the knowledge she has gained through her education, to help her future teams succeed. Throughout her journey, Halina has the support of family, friends, and peers. She openly expresses gratitude for every opportunity that has been presented to her and plans to proudly complete her education and become a successful HI Professional. Congratulations Halina.

Alexalyn Olegario is also a student at *San Diego Mesa College* pursuing an associate's degree in health information technology. Her ambitious goals do not stop with HIT. Alexalyn aspires to obtain her RHIT and then pursue a bachelor's degree. She has received high praise from instructors who expressed their admiration for her intelligence and enthusiasm for learning.

Alexalyn says, "I am excited about the diverse opportunities within this vast and dynamic field." She is eager to join the HIM community and shares her passion for advancing in her HIM career. She is grateful to CHIA for this opportunity. Congratulations Alexalyn.