



**alPHa**

Association of Local  
**PUBLIC HEALTH**  
Agencies

**2023 Distinguished Service  
Awards**

**June 13, 2023**



# 2023 Award Recipients



## Wess Garrod

Wess Garrod is a provincial Order-In-Council appointee to the Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington (KFL&A) Board of Health. Prior to his current position as KFL&A Board of Health Chair, he has dedicated countless volunteer hours in leadership for his board and has worked with local public health on a variety of projects with a focus on the promotion of physical activity in schools. Wess Garrod exemplifies volunteerism and leadership serving on the Board of Directors for the Limestone Learning Foundation, as a liaison between Limestone District School Board, Algonquin Lakeshore Catholic District School Board and the City of Kingston for its Track and Field Facility, and as President of the Kingston Track and Field Club. For his years as an educator and as a coach for football, basketball, and soccer, Wess Garrod has been recognized for his contributions to the field of education and physical activity with an 'Outstanding Service Award' and the establishment of the 'Wess Garrod Healthy Active Living Award' which is presented annually to a Limestone District School Board staff member who has worked to improve student and staff health and well-being in their school. Wess Garrod serves the alPHA Board as the East Region BOH Representative. He is currently alPHA's Treasurer and a member of the alPHA Executive Committee and has served as Vice President and BOH Section Chair. During his time on the alPHA Board, he has generously contributed countless volunteer hours to alPHA's working groups. Wess has demonstrated exceptional qualities of leadership and has achieved tangible results through his lengthy service and his distinctive acts throughout his career in education and his focus on the promotion of physical fitness. He has displayed exemplary devotion to public health at the local level and especially at the provincial level with his outstanding contributions to alPHA. He is a strong, unwavering advocate for local public health and for alPHA, as one unified voice for Ontario's local public health system.



## Dr. Charles Gardner

Dr. Gardner has been the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit since 2005, after having served as MOH with the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit for seven years. Prior to that, he worked in general medical practice in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Zimbabwe.

Dr. Gardner is a member of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) Board of Directors in the role of Vice President/Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health (COMOH) Representative, Central East Region and the past chair of COMOH. He is also a board member of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada.

Dr. Gardner is active personally and professionally on the promotion of health through green, compact, complete, walkable and cycleable communities.



## Charlene Plexman

Charlene Plexman is a graduate of the Dental therapy program in Regina, Saskatchewan and a graduate of the University of Manitoba dental hygiene program. For the past 30 years, Charlene has been the manager for the oral health programs at Public Health Sudbury & Districts. Prior to moving to Sudbury, Charlene worked in private practice as a restorative dental hygienist and was a full-time faculty member at the School of Dental Hygiene at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. She has served on a number of oral health profession committees and boards but she is especially proud of the work of Association of Public Health Dentistry where she has served on the executive for the past 10 years. Recently, Charlene has been instrumental in the development of a community dental advisory committee, where this diverse group of health professionals are collaborating on a project to increase access to dental care for vulnerable populations. Charlene has been honoured to work with the diverse and talented staff at Public Health Sudbury & Districts where oral health programming and services are a priority. Charlene believes in the work of public health and is driven to improving access to oral health care in her community. Her work in public health has included advocacy for the continuation of fluoridation of local community water systems, partnerships with schools, and a variety of health professionals standards. She looks forward to the continued growth of the oral health services in public health and expanding partnerships with local oral health professionals to meet the needs of the community.



## Dr. Brian Schwartz

Dr. Brian Schwartz is Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine and Dalla Lana School of Public Health. From 2009 to 2022 he served in leadership roles at Public Health Ontario (PHO), most recently as Vice-President, Science and Population Health. Previously he was Vice-President, Health Protection and PHO's inaugural Director of Emergency Management Support. From 2004 to 2011 Dr. Schwartz served as Scientific Advisor to the Emergency Management Branch of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and has been a member of the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan Task Group since its inception. He acted as Vice-Chair of the Ontario SARS Scientific Advisory Committee in 2003, was Chair of the Scientific Response Team for the 2009 H1N1 pandemic and served as Co-Chair of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table from 2020 to 2022.

Before entering public health Dr. Schwartz practiced emergency medicine for over 30 years in community and academic settings. He held the position of Director of the Sunnybrook Centre for Prehospital Care from 1996 to 2009. He has educated students, residents and health professionals and published extensively on public health emergency preparedness and response, paramedic care in the prehospital setting, and the intersection of clinical care and public health. Dr. Schwartz has received numerous medical leadership awards, most recently the 2023 University of Toronto President's Impact Award on behalf of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table for outstanding contributions and dedication to supporting evidence-informed decision making and response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario and nationally.



## Distinguished Service Award

The Distinguished Service Award reflects the commitment of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies to recognize the significant contributions made to public health in Ontario by board of health members, health unit staff, and public health professionals.

Eligibility of the award is open to any of ALPHA's members, including medical officers of health, board of health members, members of Affiliate organizations and, occasionally, individuals outside the Association.

The Award is given to those individuals who have demonstrated exceptional qualities of leadership in their own milieu, achieved tangible results through long service or distinctive acts, and shown exemplary devotion to public health at local and provincial levels.

Previous Distinguished Service Award recipients can be found [here](#).

Congratulations to our 2023 Distinguished Service Award recipients!



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