

# NAADAC Honors 2020 NAADAC Award Winners

By Caitlin Corbett, NAADAC Communications Specialist

Every year, NAADAC takes time to recognize and celebrate vital players of the health system and continuum of care, addiction professionals. This year, NAADAC presented awards to six outstanding individuals and one outstanding organization for their extraordinary service and contributions to the addiction profession. NAADAC traditionally presents its annual awards during its Annual Conference. Because since this year's Annual Conference was virtual, each recipient was presented with their award by NAADAC leadership in their home state while following physical distancing guidelines. Videos of these award presentations can be found at [www.naadac.org/2020-naadac-award-winners](http://www.naadac.org/2020-naadac-award-winners).



## Addiction Educator of the Year:

**Margaret Smith, EdD, MLADC**

*This award is presented to an educator who has made an outstanding contribution to addiction education.*

This year's recipient of the Addiction Educator of the Year Award, Margaret Smith, EdD, MLADC, is a compassionate addiction educator, mentor,

and advocate.

Smith has been teaching addiction studies since 1992 and has devoted her career to leading the next generation of addiction professionals into the workforce. She is an Addiction and Pre-Professional Mental Health Option Professor in the Public Health Department of Keene State College, and an Adjunct Professor at both Rio Salado College and Ottawa University.

Smith's dedication to the addiction profession lies outside of the classroom as well. She is a longtime member of NAADAC and NAADAC's New Hampshire affiliate, NHADACA (New Hampshire Alcohol & Drug Abuse Counselors Association). She also serves on the board of the International Coalition of Addiction Studies Education (INCASE), the board of Phoenix House, and is a Commissioner for the National Addiction Studies Education Commission (NASAC).

Smith is a dedicated educator, described by her students as an inspirational, motivational, and hands-on teacher who helps them meet their personal and professional goals. She uses a variety of educational tools to accommodate the learning styles of all students, and she makes herself available for any assistance her students need outside of the classroom.

Upon receiving the Addiction Educator Award, Smith said she was accepting it on behalf of all those who teach and educate the future of the addiction workforce. "While we have been challenged this year with the COVID pandemic, causing us to revise and adapt our ways of teaching, we are doing it. We are teaching, mentoring, supervising, and advising students. We should be proud of our work," Smith said.



## Mel Schulstad Professional of the Year: John Lisy, LICDC-CS, OCPC, LISW-S, LPCC-S

*This award was created in November 1979 by Jay Lewis, former editor and publisher of The Alcoholism Report, and a select group of his peers and colleagues to recognize an individual who has made outstanding and sustained contributions to the advancement of the addiction counseling profession.*

John Lisy, LICDC-CS, OCPC, LISW-S, LPCC-S, this year's recipient of the Mel Schulstad Professional of the Year Award, has demonstrated a lifetime of unwavering commitment to effecting positive change and helping others.

Lisy is known as a leader in the field of addiction, and he is nationally respected as an innovator, educator, and mentor to agencies and individuals alike. He is often sought after by his fellow addiction professionals for advice as an educator, administrator, public policy specialist, and health and human services practitioner. His counsel is viewed as thoughtful, extraordinarily valuable, and well researched.

Lisy has been the Executive Director of the Shaker Heights Youth Center for the last 25 years. He has served on the NAADAC Executive

Committee for ten years as Secretary, Treasurer, and Mid-Central Regional Vice President. He is currently a member of the NAADAC Public Policy Committee. While serving in leadership roles at NAADAC, Lisy is credited with helping to secure workforce training and development funding for both NAADAC and the State of Ohio. Lisy has served as Past President of the Ohio Association of Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Counselors (OAADAC) and now serves as OAADAC's State Legislative Chair. He was also a founding member of the Coalition for Chemical Dependency Licensure and currently serves on the Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Licensing Board.

His dedication to the advancement of the addiction profession is evident in his continued pursuit of the growth of the addiction profession and his longtime service to NAADAC and its members.

"He truly is a loyal, dedicated, and awesome addictions professional, whom we admire and respect," NAADAC Executive Director Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, BSW, NCAC II, CDC III, SAP, said about Lisy.



**Lora Roe Memorial Addiction Counselor of the Year: Theora Noble, LPC-S, LCDC, AADC, NCAC I, ICADC, Certified Therapist in EMDR**

*This award, renamed for Lora Roe in 1988, is presented to a counselor who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession of addiction counseling.*

This year's Lora Roe Memorial Addiction Counselor of the Year, Theora Noble, LPC-S, LCDC, AADC, NCAC I, ICADC, Certified Therapist in EMDR, is known as the "go-to" person for information and guidance by her fellow addiction professionals.

Noble currently works as a therapist at the Woodlands Family Institute in Texas and has worked in the field of addictions and co-occurring mental health disorders for over 35 years. She has participated in treatment from virtually every vantage point, providing her with a wealth of knowledge with all aspects of the addiction profession. She has also founded numerous programs in Houston, Texas, and supervised interns and professionals new to the field as they move from the classroom to the workforce.

Noble is a member of the advisory board for the Master's Counseling Department of Sam Houston State University and has advocated for the inclusion of training for the treatment of co-occurring substance use disorders and clinical psychiatric disorders. She also serves as the Chair of Lone Star College Human Services Technology Department Advisory Board and has helped develop one of the state's most respected human service programs.

Throughout her years of service, Noble has passed down her wealth of information through presentations at many conferences through the mentorship of fellow addiction professionals. Her contributions have helped build and strengthen the addiction profession community in Houston and helped empower and grow the future of the addiction workforce.

When discussing the joys of working as an addiction professional in her acceptance speech for the Lora Roe Memorial Addiction Counselor of the Year award, Noble expressed, "[t]here is never a time when you don't receive as much as you give. And I encourage everyone to keep giving, and keep teaching, and keep learning all the time."



**Organizational Achievement Award: Above and Beyond Family Recovery Center**

*This award is presented to organizations that have demonstrated a strong commitment to the addiction profession and particularly strong support for the individual addiction professional.*

Above and Beyond Family Recovery Center, located in Chicago, Illinois, and this year's recipient of the Organizational Achievement Award, has a reputation for being an innovative addictions treatment center that integrates creativity with evidence-based practices.

Above and Beyond is unique because it offers its treatment services for free, providing the highest level of evidence-based care available to those who can least afford it.

Since opening their doors in 2015, Above and Beyond has consistently supported their clients, the addiction profession, and their staff's development. The program has trained many students and provided the addiction workforce with highly educated and experienced professionals. This behavioral harm-reduction center offers a robust set of therapy modalities such as REBT, Logo-Therapy, yoga, mindfulness, and experiential therapies, enabling clients to create a program tailored to their specific needs. Above and Beyond also has a weekly client graduation ceremony to uplift their clients and empower their recovery.

Individuals who have had the opportunity to work with Above and Beyond describe the organization's atmosphere as one of hope, respect, and resilience. With a 26% graduation rate for their clients and 84% recovery rate after three years, this organization has proven to be a leader in the treatment services field.

"Above and Beyond would like to thank the clients here, first and foremost, as well as the staff members, the interns, and even the peer mentors that we have here. We would not be able to achieve this award without everyone who makes Above and Beyond above and beyond," Bryanna Tartt, Above and Beyond Director of Intern Programs, said on behalf of the organization.



**Lifetime Honorary Membership Award: Phyllis Prekopa, PsyD, RN/BSN, CARN-AP, LCADC, FIAAN (IntNSA), SAP**

*This award recognizes an individual who has established outstanding service through a lifetime of consistent contributions to the advancement of NAADAC, the addiction profession, and its professionals.*

This year's Lifetime Honorary Membership Award winner, Phyllis Prekopa, PsyD, RN/BSN, CARN-AP, LCADC, FIAAN (IntNSA), SAP, has been known as a leader in the field of substance use disorder treatment for over 25 years. Her passion for serving is evident in her willingness to guide, mentor, and educate her fellow addiction professionals.

Prekopa has been a Registered Nurse since 1986 and a Doctor of Psychology since 2010. She is also a Certified Addictions Registered

Nurse-Advanced Practice. She served as Nurse Manager of the Bergen Regional Medical Center detox unit for five years, where she taught and trained medical and counseling staff.

She is currently an evaluator and peer group facilitator for the Recovery and Monitoring Program (RAMP) in New Jersey. She has been an evaluator and facilitator for RAMP since 1994 when she opened the first peer support group. In this capacity, she helps nurses find recovery and return to work.

Throughout her career, Prekopa has proven herself to be a compassionate medical professional, leader, and advocate within the addiction profession. She is known as a mentor and role model who influences change and inspires her fellow addiction professionals. Prekopa promotes education to the public on addiction prevention and treatment and is motivated to teach those around her and help them better understand addiction and dual diagnosis. She exemplifies the meaning of an outstanding leader in the addiction field.

“It’s amazing to [be] acknowledged, after a lot of years, by peers and people that I work with, people that go to the conferences, they are all peers,” said Prekopa. “Thank you to all of you.”



**William F. “Bill” Callahan Award:  
David Semanco, MS, MAC, CAADC,  
CSAC, CAC-AD**

*This award is presented for sustained and meritorious service at the national level to the profession of addiction counseling.*

NAADAC’s own Director of Membership and Affiliates, David Semanco, MS, MAC, CAADC, CSAC, CAC-AD, is

the recipient of this year’s William F. “Bill” Callahan Award. Semanco has over 15 years of experience in the addiction profession, working in various treatment settings, including hospital, residential, and outpatient settings. He is known for his sense of ethics and for nurturing a strong and compassionate multidisciplinary team.

As an addiction treatment professional, Semanco specialized in the application of complementary therapies to enhance the addiction treatment and recovery process. He transitioned into the addiction treatment field in 2002 following successful careers in information technology and music and continued to incorporate technology and music into clinical practice. He is dedicated to minimizing the stigma of addiction and is an ardent proponent of innovative treatment methods that are underutilized in conventional treatment.

Semanco has helped advance the addiction profession through mentorship and by providing training and workshops for various organizations. He has represented the addiction profession and advocated for its members by serving on the NAADAC Board of Directors and as President of the Virginia Association of Addiction Professionals (VAAP), NAADAC’s Virginia affiliate. He has also served on the Board of Directors of the Virginia Summer Institute for Addiction Studies (VSIAS), one of the premier training venues for addiction professionals in the Mid-Atlantic, and was Chair of VSIAS in 2015 and 2017.

Now serving as NAADAC’s Director of Membership and Affiliates, he is helping to lead NAADAC and the addiction profession by growing and supporting our members and affiliates.

Reflecting as his time working as an addiction professional, Semanco said, “When things get rough, and you’re going through those days with lots of ups and downs, just remember that we do save lives, so go out and save a few.”



**Davida Coady Gorham Medical  
Professional of the Year:  
Kevin Leyden, BSN, RN, CARN**

*This award is presented to a medical professional who has made an outstanding contribution to the addiction profession. The award was renamed in 2019 to honor the late Dr. Davida Coady Gorham in recognition of her contributions to the addiction profession.*

The recipient of this year’s Davida Coady Gorham Medical Professional of the Year Award, Kevin Leyden, BSN, RN, CARN, has been active in the addiction profession for over three years, covering detox units and group and individual counseling. Throughout his career, he has proven himself to be a leader among his colleagues and a compassionate and skilled addictions nurse. He is described as a kind and gentle spirit who never waivers in his commitment to serve his clients.

Leyden currently works at Integrity House in Newark, New Jersey. At this treatment center, Leyden oversaw the Bates Program, which focused on treating boys aged 13-18 for substance use disorder. He has been commended for creating a safe space for the boys in this program to talk and receive guidance.

Currently, Leyden works within the Medication Assisted Treatment Program at Integrity House, assisting clients who want to use Vivitrol and Naltrexone. His coworkers state that clients have great respect for him, as he is not only compassionate, but also well educated in the treatments available.

He is a dedicated addictions nurse who has been praised for his ability to connect with his clients and help them achieve recovery while providing them with the tools to maintain it. His commitment to serving as an addiction professional is shown through his membership to the International Nurses Society on Addictions (IntNSA) and his Certified Addictions Registered Nurse (CARN) certification.

“I am truly honored. I’m flattered, absolutely flattered by this award,” said Leyden. “It is really something special. Especially in the field that we are working and talking and speaking with other nurses... it’s almost like we are receiving this as a team.”



*Caitlin Corbett is the NAADAC Communications Specialist and works on NAADAC communications, marketing, graphic design, and digital media, including the website and social media. She also contributes to the planning and logistical coordination of NAADAC events and conferences. Before coming to NAADAC, Corbett worked in government contracting with the Department of Justice on the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Youth Violence Prevention Training and Technical Assistance Initiative. Corbett holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminology from West Virginia University in Morgantown, WV.*