

# 2014 OAC Annual Awards Winners Announced

Presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual  
*Your Weight Matters* National Convention



The OAC proudly presented the 2014 OAC Annual Awards during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual *Your Weight Matters* National Convention in Orlando, Florida. A total of seven awards were presented during the Annual Awards dinner. Four of the awards were open to nominations from OAC membership and the remaining three award winners were chosen by the OAC Nominating Committee. We are excited to announce this year's winners:



*Sarah Bramlette*

## OAC Member of the Year Award

*(Award winner nominated by OAC membership)*

The winner of the 2014 "OAC Member of the Year" award was Sarah Bramlette. As an OAC member since 2012, Sarah has dedicated herself to raising awareness of the OAC, weight bias and the disease of obesity.

In 2014, Sarah was featured in the OAC's publication, *Your Weight Matters Magazine*, where she provided readers with an in-depth look at living with lipedema. She was also the first-place winner of HealthCentral's #LiveBold Anti-stigma Photo Contest. She is a lipedema, lymphedema, obesity, and health insurance advocate and blogs about her life experiences at [www.born2lbfat.com](http://www.born2lbfat.com). Sarah is currently working toward a master's degree in health law.

Sarah has worked closely with the OAC leadership, other members and staff on a variety of issues in 2014. From weight bias issues to representing the OAC in the media, she has gone above and beyond for the OAC.

## Healthcare Provider Advocate of the Year Award

*(Award winner chosen by committee)*

The winner of the 2014 "Healthcare Provider Advocate of the Year" award was Merrill Littleberry, LCSW, LCDC, CCM, CI-CPT.

Ms. Littleberry received her Bachelor of Science degree in Social Work from the University of Texas at Arlington in



*Merrill Littleberry, LCSW, LCDC, CCM, CI-CPT*

1994, followed by her Master of Science in Social Work a year later in 1995. She is a Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor and a Certified Case Manager. She is licensed by the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She is a member of the American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery and the National Association of Social Workers. Her most recent certification was received from the Cooper Institute as a Certified Personal Trainer.

As a psychotherapist, Merrill understands the debilitating effects of emotional and physical weight. She is constantly searching for education and understanding to better assist others. In addition to becoming a certified personal trainer, she has since been certified to teach in the art of T'ai Chi, tactical fitness, and more. Her training as a licensed chemical dependency counselor and nationally certified case manager adds to her insight and expertise to improve the unique goals of one's mind and body. She is a frequent *Your Weight Matters* Convention speaker and often one of the most anticipated sessions each year.

## Chairman's Award

*(Award winner chosen by committee)*

The winner of the 2014 OAC "Chairman's Award" was Amber Huett-Garcia, MPA, BS. As a long-time OAC member and member of the OAC National Board of Directors, Amber has played a key role in guiding and directing the Coalition. In addition to her position on the National Board of Directors, Amber is also the Chair of the *Your Weight Matters* National Convention Committee.



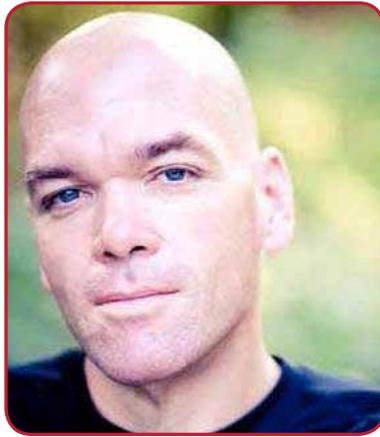
*Amber Huett-Garcia, MPA, BS*

For the 2014 *Your Weight Matters* National Convention, it was Amber's goal to make anyone's wish to attend Convention a reality. She accomplished this by creating the Convention Scholarship Program. In its inaugural year, the program awarded 13 Convention Scholarships to individuals from across the country, providing them the opportunity to take part in YWM2014. The Convention Scholarship Program received more than \$100,000 in requested funds from individuals throughout the United States and was able to award more than \$10,000 in scholarships.

## Barbara Thompson Award for Advocacy

(Award winner nominated by OAC membership)

The winner of the 2014 “Barbara Thompson Award for Advocacy” was Rob Portinga. Mr. Portinga is a Specialist in Fitness Nutrition, certified by the International Sports Sciences Association and is dedicated to constantly furthering his education in the field of health, wellness and nutrition and is a Certified Holistic Health Coach from the American Association of Drugless Practitioners after studying with the Institute of Integrative Nutrition. Rob is also one of the co-hosts of The Wake Up Call, a health and wellness program, and founder of his blog, titled “Former Fat Dudes!”



Rob Portinga

Rob is a tireless advocate for the OAC, its mission and goals. In September 2013, Rob joined the OAC on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, as the OAC advocated to elected officials for the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act of 2013, which would allow for coverage of obesity management services and treatments under Medicare.

As a bariatric surgery patient, Rob easily identifies with the struggles individuals affected by obesity face on a daily basis. He is able to use this to help others educate themselves on obesity, treatments, advocacy and more.



Abby Lentz

## Bias Buster of the Year Award

(Award winner nominated by OAC membership)

The winner of the 2014 “Bias Buster of the Year” award was Abby Lentz. Abby was an integral part of the OAC’s many bias initiatives this year. She continually notified the OAC of weight bias issues in the media, pop culture and other areas. She also worked on the documentary, *All of*

*Me*, which provided viewers with an in-depth look at life after bariatric surgery. She is the founder of HeavyWeight Yoga®, yoga designed for people who are affected by excess weight or obesity. Her mission is to change the image of yoga to include people of all sizes. She was chosen by Fitness Magazine as one of their Fit 50 and her DVDs appear on More Magazine’s Best Work DVD Dozen and their Best Yoga DVDs lists.

Abby has appeared on *Better*, the nationally syndicated lifestyle show from Better Homes and Garden, as well as *Great Day Houston* and *Great Day San Antonio*. Spreading the word about yoga for everyone, Abby has been interviewed on many news shows throughout Texas. Her presentation, “Yoga is not a 4-letter word,” has been well received at health conferences and corporate events.

## Community Leader of the Year Award

(Award winner nominated by OAC membership)

The winner of the 2014 “Community Leader of the Year” award was the Georgia Chapter of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS). Working in conjunction with the OAC for the past three years, the Georgia Chapter of ASMBS played an integral role in helping to restore the bariatric surgery benefit for Georgia state employees.



In a time when there were so few treatment resources for individuals affected by severe obesity, the Georgia Chapter of ASMBS truly stepped to the forefront of the fight and advocated for coverage of bariatric surgery.

## Dr. Blackstone Outstanding Membership Recruitment by a Physician Award

(Award winner chosen by committee)

In 2014, the OAC identified two practices that joined more than 500 new OAC members each and helped grow the voice of the OAC. Therefore, we’ve decided to honor both of these practices with the 2014 “Dr. Blackstone Outstanding Membership Recruitment by a Physician Award.” These programs are especially deserving as both of these practices have previously won this award.



The winners of the 2014 “Dr. Blackstone Outstanding Membership Recruitment by a Physician” Award are the New Life Center for Bariatric Surgery – Stephen G. Boyce, MD; and Rocky Mountain Associated Physicians – Sherman C. Smith, MD, FACS; Steven C. Simper, MD, FACS; Rodrick McKinlay, MD, FACS; and Fielding Dunn, PA-C.

The OAC congratulates all of this year’s winners and thanks all of our members for their nominations to the OAC Annual Awards. For more information on the OAC Annual Awards, please visit [www.ObesityAction.org](http://www.ObesityAction.org).



# ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

## LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

### Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
  - Community Discussion Forum
  - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



**JOIN TODAY: GO TO [OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN](http://OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN)**

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