

Kentucky Farm Bureau

2025 Career Technical Education Awards

The Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE) participates in the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) national awards program to promote excellence in Career and Technical Education. The **Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation** sponsors the annual Career and Technical Education (CTE) Awards, which seek to recognize:

- ☞ individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to the field;
- ☞ programs that exemplify the highest standards; and
- ☞ organizations that have conducted activities to promote and expand Career and Technical Education programs.



KACTE conducts the awards program, which is organized under the guidelines established by ACTE. There are 13 award categories, each with various criteria and eligibility requirements. KACTE members and individual program areas are encouraged to participate each year by submitting nominations to the KACTE Awards Committee chair. The Awards Committee reviews the nominees and selects the winners. Information on awards, the criteria, and the nominations process may be viewed on-line at the KACTE website, www.kyacte.org in the membership section or at www.acteonline.org.

KACTE award winners are entered into the appropriate ACTE national award category for the following administrative year. In recent years, several KACTE members have been recognized nationally, including:

- ★ 2025 ACTE National Carl Perkins Community Service Award finalist Shannon Roberts, family and consumer sciences teacher, Mason County High School.
- ★ 2024 ACTE National Career and Technical Teacher Educator of the Year finalist Angela Gott, professor, Western Kentucky University.
- ★ 2023 ACTE National New Career and Technical Teacher of the Year finalist Tara Poe, agriculture teacher, Bourbon County High School.
- ★ 2022 ACTE National New Career and Technical Teacher of the Year Ashley Rogers, agriculture teacher, Nicholas County High School.
- ★ 2021 ACTE National Carl Perkins Community Service Award winner Tammy Camel, family and consumer sciences teacher, Rockcastle County High School.
- ★ 2020 ACTE National Career and Technical Administrator of the Year Laura Arnold, Director of Workforce Development, Nelson County Schools; and Lifetime Achievement Award finalist Doris Sikora, Ph.D., professor, Western Kentucky University.
- ★ 2019 ACTE National New CTE Teacher of the Year finalist Bethany K. Mattingly, agriculture teacher, Seneca High School, Jefferson County, and ACTE Carl Perkins Community Service Award finalist Rosemary O. Jones, family and consumer sciences teacher, Bell County High School.
- ★ 2018 ACTE National CTE Teacher of the Year finalist J. Wes York, agriculture teacher, Caldwell County High School.
- ★ 2017 ACTE National CTE Teacher of the Year Sarah Raikes, family and consumer sciences teacher, Washington County High School, and ACTE National New CTE Teacher of the Year Jacob Scott Ball, agriculture teacher, Locust Trace Agriscience High School, Fayette County.

- ★ 2016 ACTE Champion of the Year Terry Holliday, Ph.D., former Kentucky Commissioner of Education and a leader in promoting Career and Technical Education throughout the United States.
- ★ 2013 ACTE National Career and Technical Educator of the Year Tony Brannon, Ph.D., Dean, Hutson School of Agriculture, Murray State University.
- ★ 2011 ACTE National Outstanding Teacher in Community Service finalist Phyllis Sweatt, family and consumer sciences teacher, Bowling Green High School.
- ★ 2010 ACTE National CTE Educator of the Year finalist Dale Winkler, Ed.D., then principal, Montgomery County Area Technology Center; formerly Associate Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education and Kentucky CTE State Director.
- ★ 2009 ACTE National CTE Educator of the Year finalist Ginny Ellington, University of Kentucky, and ACTE National Teacher of the Year finalist Ellie Pribble, health science technology, Harrison County Area Technology Center;
- ★ 2007 ACTE National CTE Teacher of the Year Leslie Watkins, family and consumer sciences teacher, Reidland High School;
- ★ 2001: Sarah Raikes, family and consumer sciences teacher, Washington County High School, was the first recipient of the ACTE Outstanding Teacher in Community Service Award (now the Carl Perkins Community Service Award); Donnalie Stratton, Program Consultant, Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education, received the Carl D. Perkins Humanitarian Award, then one of the highest honors bestowed by ACTE; and Sandra Miller, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, University of Kentucky, received an ACTE Outstanding Service Award.

In 2025, KACTE presents state winners in seven categories:

Postsecondary Teacher of the Year
Teacher Educator of the Year
Business-Education Partnership Award
Carl Perkins Community Service Award
Career and Technical New Teacher of the Year
Career and Technical Administrator of the Year
Career and Technical Teacher of the Year

KACTE expresses its sincere thanks to the Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation for the support that makes these awards possible year after year.

Dr. Donna Crouch

POSTSECONDARY TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Dr. Donna K. Crouch has been a driving force behind the implementation of high-quality, standards-aligned CTE programs that prioritize student success, academic rigor, and workforce relevance.

As Director of Career and Technical Education and Assistant Professor at Murray State University, she has led a systemic redesign of the university's associate, bachelor's, and master's degree programs in CTE teacher preparation. This comprehensive initiative has transformed Murray State into a state leader in preparing future CTE educators.



Dr. Donna Crouch

Guided by the High-Quality CTE Framework, Dr. Crouch ensures all coursework is aligned with industry standards, state expectations, and academic content. She led the revision of eight core courses to reflect the

Kentucky Department of Education's New Teacher Institute (NTI) performance standards, incorporating technical content, employability skills, and academic literacy. Her courses integrate project-based learning, SEL principles, and technology-enhanced instruction, helping students connect theory with practice.

Dr. Crouch emphasizes clear sequencing and articulation, enabling students to progress through structured coursework that includes early field placements, micro-teaching experiences, and full clinical practicum. Her alignment work with KDE supports students pursuing alternative certification pathways, giving them a fast-tracked yet rigorous route to the classroom. These structural supports have contributed to a 98 percent job-placement rate among CTE program completers and a 95 percent retention rate for new teachers within their first year.

DR. KELSEY CHADWICK

TEACHER EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR



Dr. Kelsey Chadwick

Dr. Kelsey Chadwick has served as the Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Educator at Murray State University. Dr. Chadwick served in the role for several years making outstanding improvements to the teacher preparation curriculum, increasing FCS visibility within the university, and recruiting students to major in FCS Education.

Dr Chadwick played an active role in Kentucky FCS University and FCS Huddle. She attended every event — even the FCS U pop-up that took place in Ashland. She made a nearly six-hour drive — one way — from the far western edge of Kentucky all the way to the opposite corner in eastern Kentucky just to share the outstanding opportunities Murray State University provides.

Dr. Chadwick and her students always attended the Kentucky FCCLA State Leadership Conference and participated in the pinning and signing ceremonies and on-stage recognitions. She is a team player and a true advocate for Family and Consumer Sciences Education and all of CTE in the state of Kentucky.

JOHNNY PITTMAN, FARMER AUTOMOTIVE

KENTUCKY BUSINESS-EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP AWARD

Johnny Pittman is known for being an advocate for youth. In 2021, Mr. Pittman accepted the chair position of the youth and young adults work group that falls within the Employer Engagement committee structure within the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB).

He called and encouraged employers to participate in discussions on how best to engage underserved youth into the workforce. Through his leadership, inviting different participants to present and holding thoughtful discussion, the group lifted up several ideas that have since been followed up on in the Education and Workforce Collaborative board meetings.



Johnny Pittman

The conversations that he continues to have resonates and unites employers, local and state leaders and others to unify as it relates to youth services and resources. Mr. Pittman helped create a summer youth internship program at Farmer Automotive Group in Louisville. Farmer Automotive uses WBL as a "cradle to grave" acquisition model, starting from the top down. The strength of the model relies on great relationships with education partners at all levels.

By investing in middle and high school exploration programs around the company's footprint, Farmer Automotive has been able to increase its talent pool. Mr. Pittman has been instrumental in creating partnerships that support community development

JENNIFER STRUNK

CARL PERKINS COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Ms. Jennifer Strunk is a Family and Consumer Sciences teacher at Clark-Moores Middle School in Madison County. Ms. Strunk works tirelessly with her FCCLA students to provide service and support to the local Richmond community.

When her students are planning service projects, she pushes them to create meaningful experiences for their audience. Ms. Strunk's service does not stop at school events. She develops relationships with local businesses that sponsor and volunteer for events, as well. Ms. Strunk has held a successful food drive for hurricane Helene victims, collected toys for Toys for Tots, collected for the local food bank, and donated to local families in crisis through the CCC.



Jennifer Strunk

ABBY LYELL

CAREER AND TECHNICAL NEW TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Abby Lyell

Ms. Abby Lyell is currently finishing her fifth year in Agriculture Education at Graves County High School. Since starting her career, she has quickly become a leader in the Agriculture Department.

Ms. Lyell's largest focus is on experienced-based learning for her students. In just these first few years, Ms. Lyell is known for having students participate in agriculture-related events across the county, state, nation, and even overseas. She believes showing students different cultures gives them a unique opportunity to learn about agriculture. As a result of Ms. Lyell's work with her students, Graves County FFA is now a community- recognized association.

Ms. Lyell ensures the agriculture program at her school is a well-thought-out experience where students can grow as they move through a pathway. She has put a lot of time and energy into clearly outlining what content gets covered in each of the six different courses she teaches. She wants students to leave her classroom with skills they can use in the real world, not just facts they memorized for a test.

THOMAS THOMPSON

CAREER AND TECHNICAL ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

As Director of the Division of Student Transition and Career Readiness with the Kentucky Department of Education's Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE), Mr. Tom Thompson oversees the development, maintenance, and funding of KY's career programs and pathways and state-level Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs).

His leadership is defined by his support of innovative professional development opportunities and willingness to develop new ways of approaching and marketing professional development for CTE teachers and CTSO advisors.

Previously, Mr. Thompson has served as Director of the Division of Technical Schools and Continuous Improvement where he oversaw 53 area technology centers and led statewide CTE leadership initiatives. He introduced or managed key innovations such as the Continuous Improvement Visit (CIV) process, advancing school accountability and CTE program quality, and supported occupation-based teacher certification, thus ensuring a high-quality pipeline of CTE educators.



Thomas Thompson

As a CTE principal, he implemented TPGES (Teacher Professional Growth and Effectiveness System) and used data-driven instruction and RTI strategies to elevate student outcomes. He also innovated within scheduling and program funding, ensuring students had access to industry certifications and EOP (End-of-Program) assessments critical for workforce readiness.

Mr. Thompson has always kept the student experience front and center through positive public relations efforts that celebrated student achievements or by creating a school environment that was safe, inclusive, and career-focused. He made sure that students felt seen, supported, and prepared for life after high school. His work has helped transform CTE from a traditional program option into an exciting, forward-looking pathway that truly puts students on a path to success.

KENNETH BRAMMELL

CAREER AND TECHNICAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Kenny Brammell has played a huge role in Agricultural Education in Kentucky. From his earliest days teaching until now, he has been a consistent voice for students and teachers in Northeastern Kentucky.

Mr. Brammell has taught Agriculture at East Carter High School for 30 years, after 18 years as store manager for Southern States Cooperative. He has served several terms as the Regional Chair for the Big Sandy River Region Agriculture Teachers, has been a member of several state wide committees, and served as the President of the Kentucky Association of Agricultural Educators (KAAE).

He has been honored by KAAE by being named the state Agriculture Teacher of the Year and has received the Ag Teachers Change Lives Award from the Kentucky FFA Foundation. Mr. Brammell's influence on the profession has gone beyond formal roles in leadership to include working with student teachers, mentoring



Kenneth Brammell

young teachers, and leading the development of partnerships with postsecondary institutions that have benefited students in his area of the state. In the classroom, Mr. Brammell incorporates FFA to the fullest and is known for having a tremendous record of FFA competitive event winners.

Mr. Brammell looks out for the well being of CTE not just in his school building but for the entire state by serving 27 continuous years on the East Carter Site Base Committee, and he served on the KACTE board, including two years as Treasurer. As KACTE Treasurer, he oversaw the establishment of the KACTE Reserve Funds, which use net proceeds from the annual CTE Summer Program to fund scholarships, stipends and professional development grants.

Mr. Brammell believes that CTE programs and training will be the salvation of holding our country together, as more and more people are growing up without the knowledge and ability to build or repair what is

required for everyday life. He teaches anyone who will listen skills necessary to survive and make life better for those around us. Mr. Brammell serves as an example of why CTE holds our communities together.

2026 ACTE Award Candidates from Kentucky

REPRESENTING KENTUCKY in the 2026 ACTE national award competition are last year's Kentucky Farm Bureau CTE Award honorees:

- ★ **Brian Welch**, agriculture teacher, Hopkins County, Carl Perkins Community Service Award.
- ★ **Vanessa Ruda**, Jessamine Career Technology Center, Counseling and Career Development Professional Award.
- ★ **Catherine Poole**, agriculture teacher, Franklin-Simpson Middle School, New Career and Technical Teacher of the Year.
- ★ **Cleary Construction**, Tompkinsville, KY, Kentucky Business-Education Partnership Award.
- ★ **Jeff Blythe**, principal, Monroe County Area Technology Center, Career and Technical Administrator of the Year.
- ★ **Cary York**, family and consumer sciences teacher, Jessamine Career Technology Center, Lifetime Achievement and Hall of Fame Award.
- ★ **Mark LaMaster**, fire sciences teacher, Fern Creek High School, Career and Technical Teacher of the Year.

The first level is ACTE Region 2 competition. Winners will be announced at the ACTE Region 2 Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, Sept. 10-12, 2025. Regional winners will be forwarded to the ACTE Awards Committee. National winners will be announced at Career Tech Vision 2025, the ACTE convention, in Nashville, Tennessee, Dec. 9-12, 2025.

KACTE extends its sincere gratitude to the Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation for sponsoring the annual Career and Technical Education Awards

KACTE Award for Meritorious Service on Behalf of Career and Technical Education in Kentucky

Two of the Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE) purposes embodied in the organization's bylaws are to foster excellence in Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Kentucky and to advocate for Kentucky and national policy to benefit CTE. These efforts have led, in part, to increased awareness by the Kentucky General Assembly of CTE's vital contributions to the Commonwealth's economy and workforce development. **In 2022, the Association instituted KACTE's Award for Meritorious Service on Behalf of Career and Technical Education in Kentucky.**

This discretionary Award is determined by the KACTE Advocacy Committee Chair and the KACTE officers based on individual contributions to enhancing the quality, equity and access of CTE in the state. In recognition of his championing the value of CTE, KACTE bestows the 2025 award to:

★ **The Honorable Robert Duvall**, Representative from District 17, Kentucky House of Representatives.

In the 2025 Kentucky General Assembly session, **Rep. Duvall**, an optometrist whose wife is a member of the Warren Board of Education, introduced House Bill 190 in the House of Representatives. The legislation directs all qualifying secondary students in public school systems to pursue advanced placement or dual-credit coursework. The KACTE Advocacy Committee and KACTE's officers raised concerns with Rep. Duvall that the way the legislation was worded could impact CTE concentrators who would be better served by courses leading to certifications. KACTE met with Rep. Duvall, who listened to the concerns, then amended his bill to provide exceptions for CTE concentrators. The legislation passed the General Assembly and was signed into law. The KACTE award recognizes Rep. Duvall not only for his legislative initiative and support of CTE, but also demonstrating how listening to affected communities or organizations can improve legislative outcomes.

KACTE Scholarships, Grants and Awards

The Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE) annually presents several scholarships, grants and awards. These programs are the professional association's continuing mission to support its membership and grow the profession of Career and Technical Education (CTE) teaching. The recipients of the 2024-25 programs are listed below. KACTE looks forward to presenting additional scholarships, grants and awards during its 2025-26 administrative year. The complete list of available scholarship, grants and awards is posted on the KACTE website, www.kyacte.org in the Education section.

Carl D. Perkins Assistanceship Award

The oldest KACTE scholarship program is the Carl D. Perkins Assistanceship Award, which annually presents two \$500 scholarships; one to a secondary student preparing to study CTE at a Kentucky postsecondary institution, and one to a postsecondary student continuing his or her studies at a Kentucky postsecondary institution. Applications are available on the KACTE website, www.kyacte.org. In 2025, due to the financial success of the 2024 CTE Summer Program, KACTE awards two additional scholarships to deserving high school students. **The 2025 recipients are:**

Brandon Castrejon, Adair County High School

Taylor Mills, Warren East High School

Mary Kerr, Western Kentucky University

Madison Frogue, Murray State University

Michael A. McMillen Student Teacher Scholarship

The Michael A. McMillen Student Teacher Scholarship honors Mike McMillen, a KACTE/ACTE life member who died unexpectedly while preparing to attend the 2013 Kentucky CTE Summer Program. He was an administrator with the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. During his service to his profession, Mike was KACTE President and Treasurer. He held many committee positions at both the Kentucky and national levels.

The Michael A. McMillen Student Teacher Scholarship presents up to 15, \$500 awards annually to pre-service teachers who will be pursuing their first classroom student teaching assignment. The money may be used for any purpose, such as transportation, clothing or supplies. KACTE will accept new applications for student teachers beginning with the fall semester of the 2025-26 school year. Teacher educators are asked to announce to their classes the availability of the scholarships for student teachers. Secondary teachers who know former students who will be student teaching in the upcoming year are asked to advise them of the availability of the scholarships. **The 2024-25 recipients are:**

- ★ **James Noah Peake**, Murray State University
- ★ **Logan Peters**, University of Kentucky
- ★ **Summer Riley**, Western Kentucky University

Donnalie Stratton Middle School Summer Program Stipends

The Donnalie Stratton Middle School Summer Program Stipends are named for Donnalie Stratton, who retired in 2014 after 62 years of service as both a family and consumer sciences classroom teacher and program consultant with the Kentucky Department of Education. Ms. Stratton died in 2016. She held several positions on the KACTE Board and was 2001 recipient of the ACTE Carl D. Perkins Humanitarian Award.

Middle School CTE teachers who are not eligible to receive professional development reimbursement from Perkins Act funds may apply for the stipend. KACTE created the Middle School Summer Program Stipend to support professional development through attendance at the annual Kentucky CTE Summer Program. Eligible teachers may apply in the spring of each year for a \$500 stipend, which covers the cost of registration plus expenses. **The 2025 recipients are:**

- ★ **Katie Blanford**, Burns Middle School
- ★ **Cindy Clyde**, Bernheim Middle School
- ★ **Macie Harrell**, East Jessamine Middle School
- ★ **Carly Martin**, Beaumont Middle School
- ★ **Sarah McCormick**, Cloverport Independent
- ★ **Melissa Metcalf**, Foley Middle School
- ★ **Whitney Stamm**, Mason County Middle School
- ★ **Olivia Wright**, Woodford County Middle School

Stratton-Tipton Scholarship

The Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE) administers the Stratton-Tipton Scholarship, which is awarded annually to support a special needs student pursuing a postsecondary degree. The

scholarship is named after Donnalie Stratton (see information above) and Bettie Tipton, a long-time administrator in the Kentucky TECH system, both of whom were pioneers in promoting education of special needs students. Contact KACTE (krisstone56@gmail.com) for more information on the Stratton-Tipton Scholarship eligibility requirements. **The 2025 recipients are:**

High School Recipient
Piper Frost, Clay County High School

Postsecondary Recipient
Deavon Shelton, University of Kentucky

KACTE Entrepreneurial Contest

Each year, the Career and Technical Education Student Organization (CTSO) State Advisers conduct a contest to recognize outstanding student-designed and -presented entrepreneurial enterprises. KACTE sponsors the contest and provides \$2,500 in prizes. Please watch for communications in the fall from the CTSE State Advisers announcing the contest and deadline. **The 2025 KACTE Entrepreneurial Contest winners are:**

- ★ **Keyli Courtney**, Carlisle County High School, \$1,000.
- ★ **Kayton Shewmaker**, Marion County High School, \$750.
- ★ **Claire Elliot**, Frederick Douglas High School, \$500.
- ★ **Lauren Taylor**, Washington County High School.

KACTE CTE Learn Stipends

Each year, the Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE) awards up to five \$1,000 stipends to Kentucky Career and Technical Education (CTE) professionals for authoring courses for **CTE Learn**, the association's on-line learning portal. When the courses, which must meet the standards of MaxKnowledge, the **CTE Learn** host, are accepted and posted to the portal, the authors earn the stipend. Through this program, KACTE seeks to build an on-line bank of Kentucky-relevant CTE courses that are free to Kentucky educators. There are nine such courses available at **CTE Learn**. All 200-plus courses in the **CTE Learn** portal can be viewed at <https://ky.ctelearn.org>. **The 2025 KACTE CTE Learn stipend recipients are:**

- ★ **Willis Holmes**, \$2,000 (for two courses).
- ★ **Jamie Scott**, \$1,000.

Applications for the 2025-26 round of stipends will be due October 1, 2025. Please e-mail kmstone1951@gmail.com for the application and additional information on course authorship.

