

Recognizing Excellence: The 2023 Gabe Zimmerman Public Service Awards

Written by Zoe Soderquist

Wednesday, 09 August 2023 13:18 - Last Updated Wednesday, 09 August 2023 13:29

The Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA) has announced the recipients of the 2023 Gabe Zimmerman Public Service Awards. These annual awards stand as a testament to the tireless dedication and significant impact of committed non-elected public servants throughout the state, who fervently uphold the spirit of civic duty.



Awardees of the 2023 Gabe Zimmerman Public Service Awards from L to R: Stephanie Zamora, Sherri Collins, Stephen J. Pauken, Joy Rich & Mark McCall

The setting for this year's award ceremony was the Arizona City and County Management Association (ACMA) Summer Conference, hosted at the Loews Ventana Canyon in Tucson.

The [Gabe Zimmerman Public Service Awards](#) honor its namesake, Gabe Zimmerman, a dedicated public servant who served as Community Outreach Director. Zimmerman's life was tragically cut short in a mass shooting at a "Congress on Your Corner" event for Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in 2011. The awards are a cooperative initiative between CFA, the Zimmerman family and ACMA and comprise three categories: Community Builder, Emerging Leader and Civic Leader. The award's distinguished honorees are non-elected public servants who exemplify the impact Gabe Zimmerman had in connecting communities and engaging Arizonans.

"CFA is honored to present the Gabe Zimmerman Public Service Awards as an essential part of advancing The Arizona We Want," says Dr. Sybil Francis, chair, president and CEO of Center for the Future of Arizona. "While highly visible elected officials set policy direction and make important decisions, our non-elected public servants and the roles they fill are not as easily observed yet vital to the quality of life in Arizona. We applaud the 2023 award recipients for their dedication, professionalism, and expertise in solving public problems and improving our communities."

Public servants eligible for the award include those employed by cities, towns, counties, special districts, agencies of the executive and legislative branches of state government, tribal governments, and personal staff working for members of Arizona's congressional delegation.

Award nominees were evaluated based on their qualities and achievements related to reshaping government practices to serve the public good, their ability to inspire and take risks, their impact in connecting Arizonans to civic life, their contributions to community well-being, innovative cost-reduction ideas, enhanced service delivery, and enduring legacy contributions.

This year's distinguished recipients are the following:

Joy Rich is the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award, which honors exceptional public servants whose careers have profoundly benefited Arizona communities and will continue to shape a brighter future for future generations. Rich's three-decade-long public service journey includes pivotal leadership roles such as Deputy Maricopa County Manager in 2012 and, in 2016, she made history by becoming the first woman to hold the esteemed position of County Manager.

Sherri Collins is the recipient of the Civic Leader Award, which recognizes extraordinary public servants who have dedicated much of their careers supporting Arizona communities and addressing Arizona's long-term issues. Since 1998, Collins has demonstrated unparalleled commitment as the Executive Director of the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH). Her tireless advocacy has led to tangible improvements, benefiting the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind individuals' access to public resources, industry, health care and education. Collins' influence extends to both local and national levels, as she serves as Board President for the National Association of State Agencies of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and contributes to various committees and task forces.

Mark McCall is the recipient of the Community Builder Award for Large County, which recognizes public servants in cities and towns who advance community pride and connection and transform their communities through various efforts. McCall has been a public servant his entire life, with a career spanning various educational and administrative roles. From his time as a public-school educator to his leadership at Arizona State University's Teachers College, McCall has consistently fostered positive change. His recent role as the Education and Quality Management Manager for Maricopa County's Correctional Health Services underlines his commitment to serving the community in innovative ways.

Stephen J. Pauken, recipient of the Community Builder Award for Small City, exemplifies the transformative power of public service. Pauken's tenure as City Manager for Bisbee has been marked by visionary leadership and financial acumen. His achievements include turning budget deficits into substantial surpluses and advocating for Bisbee at the Federal, State and County level, all the while entertaining new

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business prospects and residents. Pauken's endeavors extend beyond finances; he has facilitated increased tourism, tackled the city's Public Safety Retirement debt and championed workforce housing programs, fostering a thriving and resilient community.

Stephanie Zamora, the recipient of the Emerging Leader Award, epitomizes the next generation of dedicated public servants. Her commitment to invigorating civic health and strengthening community connections through innovation, energy and compassion is evident. As the Associate to the City Manager for the City of Scottsdale, Zamora's dedication and role-modeling provide a beacon of inspiration for aspiring public servants.

The selection of this year's honorees was determined by an independent volunteer committee comprised of distinguished individuals including Former State Senator Amanda Aguirre, Central Arizona College Governing Board Member Evelyn Casuga, Cox Communications Southwest Region Government Affairs Director Rachel Aja, and others, each contributing their insights to ensure the most deserving individuals were recognized.

The Center for the Future of Arizona is a nonprofit, nonpartisan "do-tank" that brings Arizonans together to create a stronger and brighter future for our state. Learn more at www.arizonafuture.org.