

# THE RESPIRATORY EXCHANGE

THE OHIO SOCIETY FOR RESPIRATORY CARE



*Issue 1 March 2025—The official Newsletter for the OSRC*

## **A Message from the OSRC President**



**Karla Balasko MBA, RRT**  
*OSRC President*  
2025-2026

**Dear Ohio Society for Respiratory Care Members,**

On December 7, 2024, I began my term as OSRC President and swore in our new officers on our 2025 board of directors. On behalf of the 2025 OSRC Board, we are all eager to continue supporting the purpose of the OSRC while creating goals to align with the AARC's strategic vision to engage, elevate, advocate, and educate the respiratory care profession.

Our new board of directors and committee members participated in a gallery walk goal-setting activity to help us set goals for 2025.

### **Engage:**

We will build and strengthen a diverse and inclusive professional community by:

- Actively communicating AARC/OSRC activities through our website, newsletter, and email updates.
- Exploring ways to expand and streamline the application process for scholarships awarded by the OSRC.
- Finding innovative ways to expand our membership.

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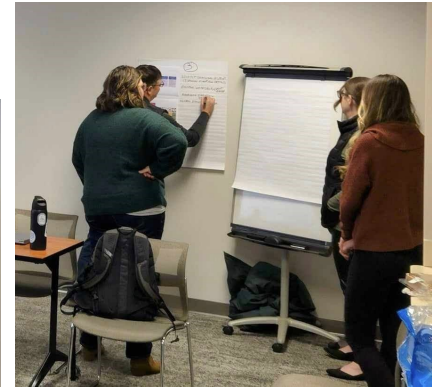


## Elevate/Advocate:

We will advance the recognition and role of the respiratory therapist. We will champion policies and initiatives that enhance respiratory care by:

- Continuing to support legislation that advances the profession.
- Continuing to support programs that create a pipeline into the profession.

The AARC/OSRC has partnered with HOSA-Future Health Professionals. This is a global student-led organization that provides opportunities to introduce career-minded students in middle school, high school, post-secondary, and collegiate institutions to health care careers. The OSRC will be participating in the Ohio HOSA Leadership Conference and Career Fair on April 9, 2025, in Toledo.



*(Members of the OSRC Board & Committee working on goals for the OSRC in 2025.)*

## Educate:

We will deliver premier evidence-based learning opportunities and promote the art and science of respiratory care by:

- Sponsoring the OSRC Annual Educational Conference for our members.

***Annual Conference August 4 – 5, 2025 & Pulmonary Function and Sleep Conference August 3, 2025***

***at the Hilton Columbus.***

Once again, we will be selling OSRC Merchandise during the conference and will have several raffles to assist us with our various fundraising efforts.

I hope that you are as excited as I am about what our board has set out to complete in 2025. None of this could be accomplished without the dedication and passion of our board and committee chairs/members who volunteer their time to serve our members.





Volunteering for the Ohio Society for Respiratory Care (OSRC) is a fantastic way to get involved and make a difference in the respiratory care community. Here are some steps you can take to volunteer:

1. **Visit the OSRC Website:** The OSRC website often has information about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities. You can check the "News & Events" section for the latest updates.
2. **Contact OSRC Directly:** Reach out to the OSRC through our contact page on the website. You can express your interest in volunteering and ask about specific opportunities available.
3. **Attend OSRC Events:** Participating in OSRC events, such as the Annual Educational Conference or the Ohio HOSA Leadership Conference and Career Fair, is a great way to meet other members and learn about volunteer opportunities.
4. **Join Committees:** The OSRC has various committees that focus on different aspects of respiratory care. Joining a committee can be a rewarding way to contribute your skills and expertise.

If you need more detailed information or have specific questions, feel free to contact the OSRC directly through our website.

Warm regards,

**Karla Balasko, MBA, RRT**

OSRC President 2025-2026





## The PHIL Award: Recognizing Excellence in Respiratory Therapy

The PHIL Award (Pulmonary Health and Illnesses of the Lungs) is a national award established in 2006 by the *FACES Foundation* (Family and Caregiver Education & Support). The award was created in memory of Philip C. Lamka, a patient who battled lung disease and was deeply appreciative of the respiratory therapists who provided him with care and comfort. His wife, Sharman Lamka, founded the award to honor and recognize RTs for their unwavering dedication to patients suffering from pulmonary illnesses.

**Author:** Wesley Bender MSRT, RRT

### Purpose

The award acknowledges RTs for clinical excellence and compassionate care, raising awareness of their vital role in healthcare. Recipients receive a plaque, a \$1,000 grant, and recognition from *The FACES Foundation*.

### Ohio Hospitals Participating

Several hospitals in Ohio present The PHIL Award, including:

- *Akron Children's Hospital.*
- *Dayton Children's Hospital.*
- *Fisher Titus Medical Center.*
  - *Holzer Health System.*
  - *Nationwide Children's.*
- *The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.*
- *University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center.*
  - *University Hospitals Parma Medical Center.*
- *University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital.*



### Nomination and Impact

Patients, families, and colleagues can nominate an RT who excels in patient care. Winning boosts morale, recognizes RT contributions, and promotes professional excellence.

To learn more or submit a nomination, visit [www.thefacesfoundation.org](http://www.thefacesfoundation.org).





# The PHIL Award Recipients in Ohio 2024-2025





THE OHIO SOCIETY FOR RESPIRATORY CARE

**SAVE THE DATE**

**2025 ANNUAL STATE MEETING  
AUGUST 4-5, 2025  
&  
OSRC SLEEP & PFT CONFERENCE  
AUGUST 3, 2025**

**MORE INFORMATION**

614/784-9772  
www.osrc.com  
osrc@pacacinc.com

**HILTON COLUMBUS AT EASTON**

**aarc  
Summer  
forum 2025**

Make plans to join us in  
**FORT LAUDERDALE, FL**  
July 12-14, 2025  
SATURDAY-MONDAY

**aarc  
CONGRESS  
2025**

**AARC CONGRESS**  
December 6-9, 2025

**It's Time to Submit Your  
Abstract for Open Forum**  
LAST DAY TO SUBMIT: JUNE 1

**Shape the Future of RTs.  
Mentor and Inspire.**

[aarc.org](http://aarc.org)

## Pepperoni Roll



For more information, contact Eastern  
District Reps, Katlyn and Samantha! @  
[OSRC@pacacinc.com](mailto:OSRC@pacacinc.com)

THAT'S A  
**WRAP**  
PEPPERONI ROLLS



## Ohio Fellows of the AARC 2024

We recently had the opportunity to speak with **Kimberly Firestone, MSc, RRT, FAARC**, and **Laura Evans, MBA, RRT, RRT-NPS, FAARC**, new recipients of the FAARC.

**Author:** Stacia Biddle PhD, RRT



**Kimberly Firestone, MSc, RRT**

Kim has been a therapist for 46 years. Her career began at the bedside, and within three years, she was serving as the Education Coordinator at Akron Children's Hospital and Adjunct Faculty at The University of Akron. Her love for instruction blossomed into Neonatal Outreach education, during which she became interested in NAVA ventilation and research. At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kim returned to the respiratory care department as Director of Respiratory Care and Outreach Services. Kim feels fortunate to have been a therapist since the beginning of the profession. She has been a part of many changes and involved in innovative research but believes the profession is stronger than ever.



Laura graduated from The Ohio State University in 1992 and began her career at Columbus Children's, now Nationwide Children's, working in the Emergency Department and pediatric ICU. Laura was promoted to Lead Therapist and eventually accepted the position of Program Manager for Respiratory Care, Pulmonary Lab, and Cardiopulmonary Rehab. She has served in her current position for 22 years and has been active in research, quality assurance, and recruitment initiatives. Recently, she has taken an interest in moral distress in healthcare and creating infrastructure to support clinicians in developing moral resilience intended to decrease burnout and increase retention.



**Laura Evans, MBA, RRT, RRT-NPS**



## Becoming an AARC Fellow:

Kim and Laura are honored to have been chosen for the AARC Fellowship. The AARC Fellowship program began in 1998 to recognize members who have offered substantial contributions to the field of respiratory care and the AARC. Laura and Kim represent devotion to the field of respiratory care and are influential advocates for higher education and leadership.

The AARC accepts nominations for Fellowship each year. A Fellow must be nominated by at least two AARC members, have demonstrated leadership, influence, and achievement in their respiratory role, and have been an active RRT AARC member for at least ten consecutive years.

### Words of advice for aspiring respiratory leaders:

Kim and Laura are proponents of advanced education. Kim recommends higher education and taking advantage of leadership courses offered by employers. Additionally, Kim advises finding an area of respiratory therapy you are passionate about and joining an AARC membership section, such as education, neonatal-pediatrics, or respiratory diagnostics. Laura suggests developing a love for lifelong learning. She recommends reinventing yourself by engaging in a challenging project, reading a difficult book, or trying something outside your comfort zone.

Reinvention can help keep you fresh and energized in your career. As managers, Laura and Kim believe it is essential to stay connected to current events and issues within the field of respiratory care to better support the mission and goals of their workplace. They also recommend becoming involved with professional organizations such as the OSRC and AARC.

For more information on becoming an AARC Fellow, visit the AARC link below!

**<https://www.aarc.org/membership/awards-recognition/aarc-fellowship-program/criteria-and-rules-for-aarc-fellowship/>**





# Amber Milem's Journey Through the AARC Emerging Leaders Program

**Author:** Wesley Bender MSRT, RRT



The desire to build stronger pathways into the respiratory therapy (RT) profession and uplift fellow RTs has been a long-standing passion for Amber Milem. That passion found its purpose through her participation in the AARC Emerging Leaders Program (ELP), where she discovered new ways to grow professionally and contribute meaningfully to the future of the field.

**Amber Milem MHA, BSRC, RRT, RRT-NPS.**

*OSRC Central District Director Jr.*

"I have wanted to become more involved in creating pipelines into the RT profession, and in empowering RTs for some time," said Milem. "But I wasn't sure exactly how to do so outside of my own organization."

Her turning point came in 2023 during her first visit to the AARC Summer Forum. Surrounded by like-minded RT leaders and educators from around the country—and the world—Milem felt an immediate sense of connection and shared mission.

"There was a 'teaser' during Summer Forum, regarding plans to launch an Emerging Leaders Program that would help connect those interested in doing more with the AARC," she recalled. "I knew immediately that this was something I wanted to pursue."

## ***Growing Through Connection and Community***

As an introvert, Milem knew that expanding her leadership journey beyond her organization would require intentional effort. But the ELP's structure—focused on mentorship, networking, and professional development—offered the perfect foundation.

"The ELP was designed to connect participants with movers and shakers in the field," she said. "Many leaders in the RT field poured into the program—as formal and informal mentors, content experts, and sources of inspiration."

The impact was immediate and far-reaching. Members of her cohort collaborated on poster and oral presentations at the AARC Congress and became actively engaged in national and state-level initiatives. Many, including Milem, took on new leadership roles within the profession.

## ***Shaping Her Path—and the Future of the Profession***

One of the most powerful takeaways for Milem was discovering a network of passionate RT professionals who willingly shared their time, knowledge, and leadership wisdom.

“We engaged in weekly leadership discussions led by seasoned experts,” she said. “These conversations offered not only strategies and insights, but also a space to reflect on real-world leadership challenges and experiences.”

Through the program, Milem became more closely acquainted with the work of the AARC and identified additional opportunities to serve. Since completing the ELP, she now serves on an AARC committee, works as a social media ambassador for the NBRC, and holds an elected position with the Ohio Society for Respiratory Care (OSRC).

“In the future, I hope to continue to grow in involvement and support for the profession,” she added. “We need more empowered and engaged RTs, and I hope to continue to support efforts to build the profession locally and nationally.”



(L-R Joe Huff OSRC Delegate, Chris Meade Ohio EL Candidate, Amber Milem EL Candidate, Dr. Nancy Colletti Past OSRC President, and Chris Schwaenberger Past OSRC Delegate)

## ***Advice for Aspiring Leaders***

For others considering the Emerging Leaders Program, Milem offers simple but enthusiastic advice:

“Do it! I can’t say enough good things about the ELP. The program does require some time and effort, but the rewards are immeasurable.”

Whether you’re seeking growth, connection, or a way to elevate your impact, Milem’s experience makes it clear: the Emerging Leaders Program is a powerful launchpad for those who want to shape the future of respiratory care.

***For more information about the Emerging Leader Program follow the link to the AARC for more information!***

<https://www.aarc.org/events-and-programs/emerging-leaders-program/>





# Central District Healthcare Career Summit 2025







# Legislation & Professional Updates

**Author:** Courtney Kallergis BS,  
RRT  
Legislation Chair

## Advancing the Profession: APRT Licensure in Ohio

The **Ohio Society for Respiratory Care (OSRC)** continues to lead the charge for **Advanced Practice Respiratory Therapist (APRT)** licensure in the state. Representatives John and Young plan to reintroduce the same amended language as seen in Sub. HB 102 from the previous legislative session.

To further this initiative, the **American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC)** has established the **Advanced RT Fund**. This funding opportunity provides seed grants to colleges, universities, and AARC chartered affiliates, supporting the development of APRT curriculum programs and legislative licensure efforts. The OSRC is actively pursuing this funding to support its APRT goals.

Learn more about the Advanced RT Fund here: [aarc.org Advanced RT Fund](https://aarc.org/Advanced-RT-Fund).

## Compact Licensure: Building a Stronger Workforce Across State Lines

During the **March 4th, 2025 Recruitment and Retention virtual session**, Grant Minnix of the **Council of State Governments (CSG)** presented an overview of the **Respiratory Therapy Licensure Compact**. This effort mirrors successful licensure compacts from other healthcare professions, offering RTs the ability to practice across member states more efficiently.

**SB 149 – Enter Respiratory Care Compact** was officially introduced on **March 18, 2025** by Senator Kristina Roegner. The OSRC Legislative Committee is currently preparing **proponent testimony** in support of this important bill.

Access the compact update and background information at: [CSG Respiratory Compact](#)

OSRC members can request access to the 3/4/25 presentation recording by contacting the OSRC office.

## Recruitment and Retention Virtual Series

The OSRC continues to offer **virtual meetings** for managers and educators, aimed at addressing recruitment and retention challenges in the field of respiratory care. These sessions provide a platform to collaborate, share strategies, and support workforce development.

Keep an eye on [osrc.org](https://osrc.org) for upcoming events – all are welcome!

## State Medical Board of Ohio Updates

The **State Medical Board of Ohio** recently shared developments related to **Senate Bill 109**, which enhances the board's response to sexual misconduct complaints across all licensees.

Review the details here: [SB 109 Overview](#)

Additionally, **131 Respiratory Care Professionals** have been licensed through **license reciprocity** in Ohio. This pathway supports the influx of qualified RTs from other states.

Learn more about reciprocity options at: [License Reciprocity Info](#)



## Communications Committee:

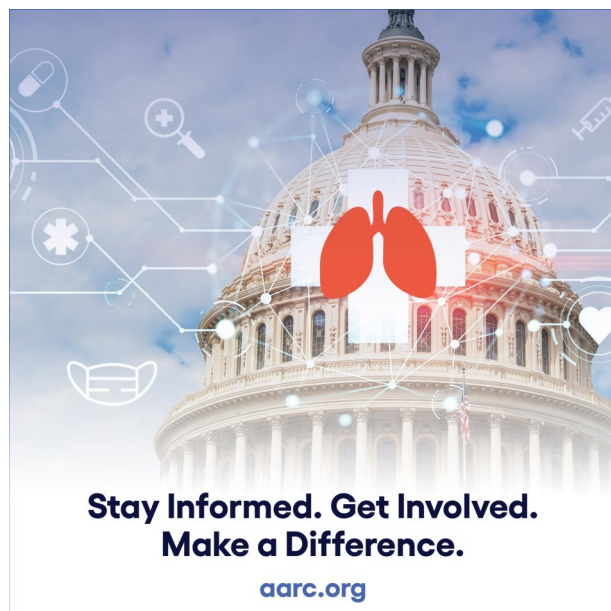
Wesley Bender MSRT, RRT *Chair*

Sherrie Babic BSRC, RRT

Stacia Biddle PhD, RRT

Brad Boling MBA, RRT, FACHE

Brittney Conley MBA, BS, RRT



Kristin L. Jackson

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