

# *Congratulations*

*to all who were nominated for a NACHC  
Community Health Care Award of Excellence  
and special thanks to those who recognized  
the dedication and contributions  
of their colleagues to the health center mission.*

*The 2019 Awards of Excellence will be presented at the  
general session on Monday, August 19, 2019.*

## **Merrill R. Thomas**

President and CEO  
Providence Community  
Health Centers  
Providence, RI



### *Recipient of the 2019 John Gilbert Award*

This award was established in recognition of John Gilbert's outstanding contribution to NACHC and the community health care field prior to his death in 1974. The award is presented to an individual who, as a member of either the board or staff of a health center, has demonstrated a level of excellence in the community health care field.

I am very humbled and honored to receive the John Gilbert Award for 2019, especially when I see the list of previous recipients and the legacy of those who have won in past years. I am also very thankful for the many mentors and friends I have made over the years, and the help and assistance that was always made available to me by my colleagues at other community health centers.

Who knew that 34 years ago when I walked into the community health center for a job interview, that it would be the start of my professional career and life's work. What started as a job in the accounting office, soon turned into the knowledge that I could make a difference, and that my health center really needed to get its act together if it was going to survive. It's truly amazing when I think back to the beginning days, where everything was done by hand, and our new computer system was in plastic wrap in the basement because we had no one to implement and install it. So I started my journey, and was able to keep growing in knowledge, while also seeing my health center grow in numbers and service, which continues today.

To have a job that you love going to every day, and still love after 34 years is part of what makes working at a Health Center so meaningful. To have a mission statement and core values at your work place that match your faith and values makes it more than just a job. It is that passion and a place to serve and lead that has brought me so much satisfaction.

Again, I would like to thank all of those who have been part of my journey. I couldn't have done it without you all. Mostly, I want to thank the many board members, who always remind me of what a difference the health center has made in their lives, and that the need continues in our communities, and that our work is not done.