



Publicly Recognizing Volunteers through Awards

Thanking volunteers is necessary. It is the right thing to do. It is motivating and inspiring for the volunteer and for other volunteers and it nurtures leadership potential. Showing appreciation can take many forms, from a simple spoken (and heartfelt) thank you to spoken public recognition at gatherings, from tangible gifts to more permanent forms such as engraved on-site plaques. **One method of public recognition involves giving awards.**

The way that the award is presented is as important as the award itself. Both have to be geared to the value, importance and nature of the acts that are being rewarded. Contributions of time and talent need appropriate recognition just as much as large contributions of money that often result in naming something after the donor (such as a building, a professorship, a scholarship, etc.) – after all Yale was named after its first large donor.

Below are some examples of recognition for volunteer and alumni service bestowed by Yale. Each example lists **what is given, for what** it is given, **who decides** to give it, **who presents** the award, and **in what setting**. There is great variety in these examples, which show some of the ways in which recognition can be calibrated to the nature of the volunteer engagement. Of course, every institution has its own traditions which can be used to make an award special.

The Yale Medal (<http://aya.yale.edu/content/yale-medal>). The Yale Medal is the highest award presented by the AYA, conferred solely to honor outstanding individual service to the University. In addition to the Medal itself, recipients' names are carved into the wood panels of Commons. Recipients do not necessarily have to be Yale degree holders, but most are. Each year, up to 5 recipients are chosen by a committee of the AYA Board of Governors. The Medal is given primarily and typically for volunteer service to Yale, so the committee rarely considers current or past members of the University administration, faculty or staff. The Medal is presented by the President of Yale during the annual AYA Assembly (joined in many years by those attending the Yale Alumni Fund Convocation) at a special dinner given at Commons in honor of the Yale Medal winners, and attended by approximately 500 volunteer leaders.

AYA Board of Governors Excellence Awards (<http://aya.yale.edu/content/aya-board-governors-excellence-awards>). These certificates recognize the superior accomplishments of Yale's classes, regional clubs and associations, shared identity and interest groups, and the graduate and professional school alumni associations. They recognize events, programs, and best practices. Recipients are chosen by a committee of the Board of Governors of the AYA, and written up for future reference: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B_xST13LJbZ_UXVpUmxTcTIYMUE/edit. The Awards are presented by the Executive Director of the AYA, during Assembly at a special awards reception.

AYA Leadership Awards for Volunteer Innovation and Service (<http://aya.yale.edu/content/aya-leadership-awards-volunteer-innovation-and-service>). This engraved pewter bowl is given to individual volunteers for extraordinary accomplishments, innovation and selfless service to Yale. The AYA staff chooses the recipients – 5 or 6 each year. The award is presented by the Executive Director of the AYA, during Assembly at the awards reception. See link to https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B_xST13LJbZ_UXVpUmxTcTIYMUE/edit after pp. 48-51.

Howard R. Lamar Faculty Award (<http://aya.yale.edu/content/howard-r-lamar-faculty-award>). The Howard R. Lamar Faculty Award is presented by the Board of Governors of the AYA, to a Yale faculty member to honor outstanding individual service to the alumni of Yale University, through a variety of alumni relations programs. Inaugurated in 2014, the first five recipients were chosen by a committee consisting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors plus AYA professional staff. The Award was given in the spring.

Yale-Jefferson Public Service Awards (<http://aya.yale.edu/content/stay-jefferson-award>). Certificates are awarded to three Yalies – one alumnus, one graduate/professional student, and one undergraduate – who inspire others in the Yale community through innovative and sustained contributions of service to the greater good. They are given under the auspices of Students and Alumni for Yale (known as STAY, an AYA-supported student-alumni organization) and decided upon by a committee of student and University leaders. The awards are presented by a Yale Vice President at a Friday luncheon during AYA Assembly (joined in many years by those attending the Yale Alumni Fund Convocation) and attended by approximately 500 volunteer leaders.

Class Awards (http://aya.yale.edu/content/class-awards_2999). AYA encourages Classes to bestow awards at their 5-year reunions to recognize and thank classmates who have dedicated time, energy and enthusiasm to the Class. Awardees are selected by the Class leadership.