



## Nelson Gotera

I am nominating Nelson Gotera for the Innovation and Continuous Learning Star Award because he's not only one of the hardest working people I know, but he also takes the time to patiently teach students or new techs he's partnered with in the OR. He has used his influence to further the careers of others and, in doing so, has improved future patients' experiences in their operating rooms. His natural ability to learn and adapt has left a lasting impression on the surgeons he's worked with, so much so that they've coined the specific use of a tool as "The Nelson," which is now taught to students at NYU. I am continuously amazed by his growth as a technician and can only expect more innovations coined "The Nelson" as time passes.

– Vicki Kalonaros

## Michelle Muhammad

I have always been interested in the advancement of my profession. My school was the first Surgical Technology program in America to purchase this system to help train students on how to perform scope cases. I worked with this company to help develop the now popular "Team ST" system, which is utilized across America in many Surgical Technology programs. As an instructor for Surgical Technology, I am always looking for new and innovative ways to teach my students. I was also instrumental in acquiring a mannequin that gives birth to a baby, allowing my students to actually deliver a baby and understand the process physicians go through. It offers both vaginal deliveries and can be set up to simulate a C-section. I have also worked to ensure that virtual reality systems help perioperative nursing students understand laparoscopic cases and nursing first assistant students understand their role in assisting surgeons during these cases. As new modules develop, I evaluate how they can be utilized in the programs our college offers to the medical community. As our industry evolves, so must the equipment we use to teach.

## Nadiya Sorych

I am a hardworking, dedicated, and a strong teacher both at work and in college, always striving to share knowledge with new students.



## Jennifer Willson

Jenn is our first surgical tech at The Surgery Center. She handles all of the preference cards here. She works hard and diligently to keep them up to date...hard to do since some surgeons change their minds week to week on what is needed. She is currently broadening her medical background and working on her medical coding certification. -Kristen Camelio

## Donabel Bona Hueber

Donabel embraces the values of innovation and continuous learning. She takes every opportunity for professional growth and encourages other surgical technologists to continue learning and pursue leadership opportunities. She spearheaded the Primary Service Surgical Technologist (PSST) role in our OR and opened the door for others to become PSSTs for their service. As a delegate for NYS AST, she attends yearly conferences and even recruited two of our own surgeons to speak at next year's conference. She is someone we can all rely on to make our surgeries successful, and I am fortunate to work alongside her. Thanks for all you do, Donabel! -Brianna Carr



## Allison Keeran

Allison is an amazing tech. She is always friendly and on top of her game. -Colleen Winterland

Allison is an outstanding surgical tech. Her knowledge and ability to work with her team are exceptional, all while keeping her patient safe. Allison has also earned her First Assist and Radiation Safety Officer certifications. She is a wonderful mentor, continuously assisting new surgical technicians and students still in their respective programs. -Cynthia Freed

## Tia Jones

I can work under pressure and am a team player. I have been a great preceptor to my students, and they have learned a lot from following my footsteps.

## Alexander Delgado

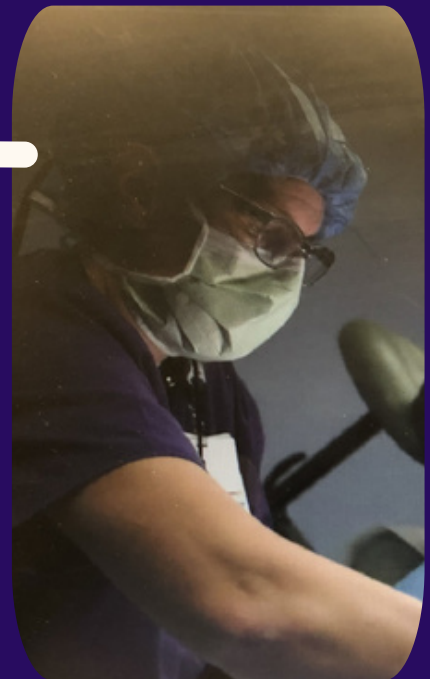
Alexander Delgado is always willing to learn new cases and he always gets involved with his cases. He scrubs in the most critical and complex surgeries. -Leizl Ruiz

## Cindy Mask

I am honored to nominate myself for the Innovation and Constant Learning Award. With 42 years of experience in the operating room and 19 years as an educator at Tarrant County College, I have passionately championed lifelong learning and continued education as essential to the advancement of my beloved career. Since 1982, I have embraced the evolving nature of surgery, integrating new techniques and technologies into my practice and teaching. My commitment to staying current has enriched my own skills and empowered over 400 Certified Surgical Technologists (CSTs) to excel in their roles. Even as I approach retirement, my love for the surgical technologist role remains unwavering. I am currently scrubbing in again, demonstrating my deep commitment and enduring passion for this profession. Beyond technical skills, I have always strived to instill empathy and a genuine care for our patients as the cornerstone of my teaching. I believe fostering these qualities is as crucial as technical proficiency in shaping exceptional surgical professionals. In recognition of my dedication to innovation, lifelong learning, and nurturing empathy and compassion in my students, I am grateful to be considered for this award. My career has been driven by a passion for pushing boundaries and inspiring others, and I remain devoted to this journey.

## Molly Woolridge

Molly has been a surgical technologist for 39 years. During the pandemic, she and the hand surgeon she works with started performing surgeries in the office—the first in the U.S. With her years of experience in the sterile field, they transformed an exam room into an operating theater. They have now performed over 2,000 surgeries without a single infection, helping many people who had no recourse during the pandemic. They are now assisting other surgeons in starting similar programs. No anesthesia personnel, no circulating nurse—just a surgical technologist and a surgeon providing excellent care.



## Jo Lana Cota

Nominated in all categories!! Jo Lana personifies leadership. She is committed to advancing the standards of education and the profession of surgical technology. She works tirelessly to ensure her students, faculty, and fellow CSTs receive the recognition and support they need and deserve. –Stephanie Hurst



## Cheryll Alba

I am nominating Cheryll Alba for this recognition as a surgical technologist because of her exceptional dedication to patient care, her professionalism, and her unwavering commitment to the surgical team. Cheryll consistently goes above and beyond her responsibilities by maintaining a sterile and efficient environment in the operating room, ensuring that all surgical instruments are properly prepared, and anticipating the needs of the surgical team. Her ability to remain calm under pressure and her attention to detail have been critical in ensuring successful surgeries and patient safety.

Furthermore, Cheryll's passion for her work is evident in her willingness to mentor new team members, sharing her knowledge and experience to foster a supportive and collaborative environment. Her positive attitude, strong work ethic, and deep sense of responsibility make her a standout in the field. It is this combination of technical expertise, compassion, and teamwork that makes Cheryll Alba deserving of this recognition. -David Garay



## Lakeisha Pierre

I admire her dedication to her profession! She is always striving to do her best and has relationships with her teams.  
-Jessica Pillette

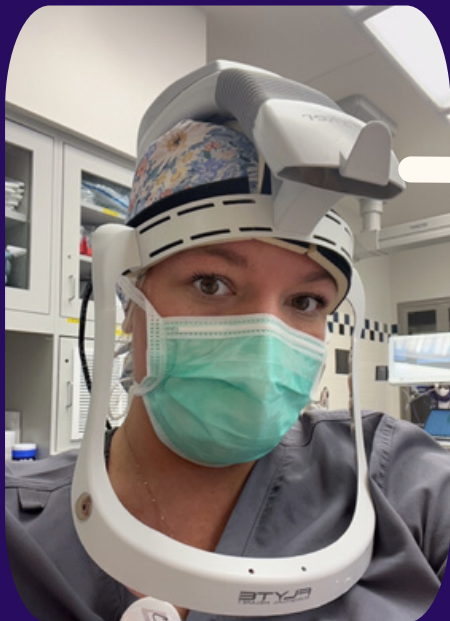


## Brandi Thomason

Brandi Thomason is an accomplished Certified Surgical Technologist who has advanced her career path from total joint reconstruction to education! She remains committed to the ever-changing field of surgical technology by staying current with new technology and sharing it with future surgical technologists in the classroom setting. She uses great imagination to build surgical simulations and activities that spark the interest of students while providing a relevant learning experience. She goes above and beyond and is a true asset to the field of Surgical Technology!  
-Morgan Boyd

## Lisa Marie Kaduthodil

Lisa came to the OR I am working in and was doing a lot of orthopedic cases. Our team needed someone to handle robotics, so she stepped up and learned them. She then took the time to teach me, and I was so touched by this. She is a very hard worker and brings positive energy to the room. -Michelle Neon



## Zoe Koepp

Zoe is always eager to learn why we are doing what we are doing or why we chose to do it this way instead of that way. She is excelling in her career as a surgical technologist and is currently in school to become a surgical first assistant. She always puts her patients first and isn't afraid to speak up.



## Punyanooch Sicherman

It would like to nominate my husband. Before he started his career in the medical field, he worked as a server and bartender. After COVID-19, he decided to go back to school and finished what he started a while back. We have two beautiful daughters. He is always willing to do anything to support the family, going to class in the morning and working in the restaurant at night. He's really working hard in both positions. He graduated and finally got a job in the medical field. He knows what he wants to do in the medical field: he wants to deliver organs. He always wants to learn more and more. Since he graduated, even before he got a job, he has already planned his next class for surgical first assistant. My daughters and I are so proud of him. -Matthew Sicherman

## Justin Bailey

I would like to nominate Justin Bailey because of his continuous growth, innovation, and leadership. Justin began his career as a United States Navy Corpsman. After 8 years of honorable service, he continued his journey by working at Emory University Hospital as a Cardio Thoracic CST. Later, he envisioned ways to improve patient outcomes by developing various surgical drain products. Justin ventured into medical sales and started working as a regional rep, providing products for veterans in the VA organization. Justin is currently the Director of Operations for TubeEvac. In addition, he is the Orlando Health Corporate Manager of Surgical Quality for the ASC Division while assisting his centers as a CST III. Justin now oversees 7 surgical centers and leads CSTs to success. He prides himself on leading from the bottom up so that CSTs own their profession and want to come to work. His goals for CSTs are very simple:

1. Own your cases by staying 10 steps ahead.
2. Always envision positive outcomes for every single patient.
3. Always be working towards positive goals to grow professionally.

Justin considers being a CST a privilege and honor.

"The opportunity to see other CSTs grow in the industry by creating awesome opportunities to care for patients is the best feeling in the world."



## Meagen Yazzie

She is an amazing and hardworking woman. She strives to do her best and is patient and kind. She is willing to teach and eager to learn more. She loves to travel and makes her people proud to have a strong and independent woman to support them. Her success story is to become a CRNA, and we're proud of her.

## Michael Freter

I was fortunate enough to learn the techniques required to perform and assist in laparoscopic nephrectomy procedures. I was involved in the first one performed in northeast Oklahoma, as well as the first donor laparoscopic nephrectomy, first partial nephrectomy, and first cryogenic partial nephrectomy. This was a privilege that allowed me to learn new technology back in 2000.





## Amy Freeman

I nominate Amy Freeman for Innovation and Continuous Learning because she excels at everything she does. She has the best knowledge and has worked with every Da Vinci system out there. She excels in robotic procedures, and surgeons request her for her expertise and skills. In the past year, she performed surgery with the Mira robot to seek FDA approval. She traveled to Texas with a surgeon to learn the Ion robot through Intuitive. She continued her education by becoming a surgical first assistant through Meredian and has had three staff surgical techs join a first assistant program following her lead. She will scrub any case, including esophagectomies, robotic thyroids, base of tongue, thoracic VATS, kidney transplants, prostates, and so much more. Her personal development continues to grow with everything she does, and she strives to be the best she can be for the best patient care.



## Andrew Purio

I have been working as a CST for almost 10 years now, and I've always had a knack for inventing and innovating ideas on the fly in surgery to better assist the surgeon and improve patient outcomes. As a result of my critical thinking and my drive to come up with better instrumentation and processes, a partner and I started a surgical innovations company that focuses on innovating, inventing, and patient advocacy. Right now, we have two patents pending: one for a surgical gown with innovations to the cuff, and the other for a liquid waste receptacle that takes in liquid medications to help with diversion and comply with the EPA's ruling on disposing of medications down the sink or in the trash. I honestly just want to make surgery safer and more efficient for not only the patients but also for the surgeons, RNs, CSTs, and others.

## Bryana Betchley

For my determination and continuous education in our field, my motivation to help others, and my commitment to being the best for my team and the patient.

## Kara Edwards

Kara shows excellent skills, anticipation, and surgical consciousness. She also sees patients and is able to observe the before and after of the patients at the plastic surgery center where she works. She's also the face of the company on the plastic surgery center website. She would be a great candidate for this award because she's always looking to learn and advance her skills in her profession.

—Bernard Babrow



## Kaylee DeFriece

Kaylee is a huge team player. Her communication with her surgical team is exceptional. She is always someone I can count on to be there for our more difficult robotic procedures. As a new surgical technologist, Kaylee is always asking questions and wanting to learn new things. She has been an amazing addition to our team, and it's a true honor to have assisted with her skill growth over the last year. I look forward to seeing you grow professionally and share your knowledge with others. You rock!

—Lily Finneyfrock

## Tamie Joyner

She was brand new to surgical tech and trained me to be a great tech. Even though she was still learning herself, she taught me all she knew, and it helped me a lot in becoming a great tech myself.

—Nekayla Williams