



EASTER TO RECEIVE OLNEY MEDAL

Elizabeth Easter is the 2026 recipient of the **AATCC Olney Medal**. Easter, a professor in the Department of Retailing and Tourism Management at the University of Kentucky, Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, is being recognized for her prolific contributions to textile sciences.

Easter's dedication and years of service to this industry have included working in academia and industry, focusing on research in textile science and applied research with protective clothing, laundry fundamentals, and quality evaluations of textile and apparel products. This includes protective clothing for firefighters and healthcare, and personal protective equipment (PPE) for firefighters, first responders, and healthcare workers in laboratories, dental offices, and hospitals.

The results of Easter's research projects are found in peer reviewed publications, books, journal articles, as well as presentations and student theses. She has received numerous research grants and established the first Textile Testing Laboratory in the University of Kentucky (UK), where she has taught, trained, and mentored students and industry professionals for over 40 years, influencing the future of the textile industry.

Career

Easter earned a BS in Vocational Home Economics Educations at Morehead State University in Morehead, KY, USA in 1971. Soon after receiving her degree, Easter began her academic career, teaching Textiles & Clothes classes at Hazard High School in Hazard, KY, USA, from 1971 to 1972.

In 1973, Easter earned an MS in Textiles & Clothing from the University of Tennessee and began working as a Home Economics Extension Agent at the University of Kentucky and at Kentucky State University. In 1982, Easter earned a PhD in Textile Science from the University of Tennessee, and started her professorship at Berea College, in Berea, KY, USA, in the Department of Home Economics.

Easter began her current position in 1984, as a professor at the University of Kentucky in Retailing & Tourism Management

In 1988, Easter established the Textile Testing Laboratory, which provides contractual testing services for textiles during product development and evaluates their durability and performance during use and care. In reflection of her academic career, "My teaching philosophy is rooted in a lifelong appreciation for learning and the pursuit of knowledge. My goal is to equip students with the resources, skills, technology, and professional networks they need to pursue careers in the industries of their choice."

From 1987 to 1992, Easter served as the Research Director for the Environmental Protection Agency grant: "Protective Clothing for Agricultural Workers" in the Textiles, Merchandising and Design Department at the University of Tennessee, in Knoxville, TN, USA. Additionally, Easter conducted research on clothes care appliances as a Professor in Industry in Laundry Fundamental research at the General Electric Appliance Park in the Laundry Division in Louisville, KY, USA during the summers of 1993 to 2000.

From 1986-2026, Easter worked as a continuing education instructor, teaching Basics of Linens at the American Laundry and Linen College, for the Association of Linen Management (ALM).

In her career, Easter has offered consulting services to multiple companies and organizations that support the textile industry, including serving as a reviewer and providing training on test methods, acting as a PPE consultant, and serving as an expert witness in several legal cases. Easter is an active member of AATCC, as well as the ASTM, the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers (AHAM), and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Achievements and Awards

Easter has written more than 20 peer reviewed journal articles, and she has 23 refereed proceedings publications, including an article in the November 2023 *AATCC Journal of Research*. Over the years, she has published multiple papers in the *AATCC Journal of Research*, *AATCC Review*, and its predecessors. Easter has been invited to present her research at numerous events, conferences, and seminars, including several AATCC International Conferences.

Easter served as research advisor for 32 graduate students for their master's theses. At the Textile Testing Laboratory, she supervises undergraduate and graduate students in who work as lab technicians and research assistants. Through this hands-on research, students investigate industry challenges and strengthen their problem-solving skills. Over her career, she has secured more than US\$1.6 million in external grants and more than US\$111,000 in internal research grants.

Research Awards

In her 50+ years in academia, Easter's research has influenced her students and has impacted the textile industry. External and internal research grants have funded her research, and the University of Kentucky Textile Testing Laboratory enables her to conduct applied research in protective clothing, laundry fundamentals, and quality evaluations of textile and apparel production.

Easter has received a grant contract from ALM for a "Quality Control Lab for ALM" valued at US\$1,092,654. Cotton Incorporated has sponsored her for product development and laundry studies. In 2010, Easter received a grant for the "University of Kentucky Research Study on Evaluating Used Firefighter's Gear to Determine Appropriate Retirement Age," sponsored by the National Institute of Standards & Technology (NIST) for US\$200,000. Throughout her career at the University of Kentucky, Easter has also received several grants from the university, for research in the evaluation of protective clothing and laundering, and for major research in equipment competition.

AATCC Involvement

Easter has been a member of AATCC since 1972. As an active member, Easter has served on several research committees, including RA88 Home Laundering Technology and RA75 Evaluation of Materials & Products for End Use Performance. Easter is an active member of the administrative committee, C7 Publications Committee, and has been a member of multiple award committees. Easter is a voting member of the Materials Interest Group and has attended several meetings for the Materials Interest Group and the Concept 2 Consumer Interest Group. She has presented at several AATCC conferences and workshops and has published articles in *AATCC Journal of Research* and its predecessors. Easter has been a judge for student and intersectional paper competitions, has organized section sessions, and served as secretary for the Midwest Section. Locally, Easter is an active member of the Great Lakes Section.

The Olney Medal

Established in 1944 in honor of Louis Atwell Olney, the founder and first president of AATCC, the Olney Medal recognizes outstanding achievement in textile or polymer chemistry or other fields of chemistry of major importance to textile science. The award consists of a gold medal, a scroll, and an honorarium.

Presentation of the medal each year is a highlight of AATCC's annual conference. The AATCC International Summit will be held October 4-6, 2026, at the Hotel Ballast Wilmington, in Wilmington, NC, USA. The Association will present the Olney Medal at the Awards Luncheon on October 6. Easter will deliver the traditional Olney Medal Address, titled, "The Evolution of an Academic Career: From Sewing Classes and Detergent Chemistry to Building an Industrial Research Program for Launching Student Career Success," at 8:30 am.

For information about the Olney Award, and a list of past Olney Medal recipients., visit www.aatcc.org/olney.