

Lynnette Garrett Named 2026 N.F. Cimaglia Educator of the Year

Everyone at Milan Institute Bakersfield knows Ms. Lynnette. "I don't just teach skills," Garrett said. "I help people change their lives."

BAKERSFIELD, CA, UNITED STATES, July 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Two of Lynnette Garrett's students got in a car in Bakersfield and drove four hours to Anaheim. They brought flowers. They wanted to be in the room.

That is the part Jean Rydahl keeps coming back to.

"You know Lynnette makes a difference to her students when two of her students drove four hours from Bakersfield to Anaheim to bring her flowers and be present for the award ceremony," said Rydahl, education director at Milan Institute.

The ceremony was the 2026 Career Educators Alliance Conference, where educators from across the country gathered to recognize excellence in career and technical education. The award was the N.F. Cimaglia Educator of the Year, presented annually by Milady and the American Association of Cosmetology Schools and widely regarded as the most prestigious teaching honor in beauty and wellness education. It goes to one instructor whose passion, leadership, and student engagement have measurably changed lives.

From Student to Instructor of the Year

This year it went to an esthetics and massage therapy instructor at Milan Institute's Bakersfield, California campus.

Garrett did not arrive at Milan Institute as a hire. She arrived as a student. She earned her



Lynnette Garrett, 2026 N.F. Cimaglia Educator of the Year Award

aesthetics license there, then her massage therapy license, and eventually walked back through the same doors on the other side of the classroom. She has been teaching for four years and seven months. She has lost count of how many students she has taught — hundreds, somewhere in there — which is its own kind of answer.

Ask anyone on the Bakersfield campus, and the pattern is the same: every student who comes through the door knows Ms. Lynnette. Some of them from a class she taught. Many of them from a conversation in a hallway on a hard day.

“I don’t just teach skills,” Garrett said. “I help people discover confidence, purpose, and the courage to change their lives and someone else’s.”

For more than 40 years, Milan Institute has prepared students for careers in beauty, wellness, healthcare, and the skilled trades. The measure of that work has never been only the credential a graduate carries out the door. It is the instructors who get them there — the ones teaching technique and, alongside it, professionalism, self-belief, and the quiet expectation that a student can be more than they arrived believing.

Career education, at its best, is a transfer of confidence as much as competence. Students enroll for a license. What determines whether they build a career with it often has more to do with whether someone in the building believed in them out loud.

What the Cimaglia Award Recognizes

Garrett is the kind of educator who does that as a matter of routine. She knows what the first day feels like from the inside, because she sat in that seat. She knows what it costs to change direction mid-life, and what it takes to finish.

The Cimaglia award recognizes educators whose influence extends beyond their own classrooms and into the profession itself. In practice, that influence is hard to quantify. It shows up in a graduate opening her own suite. In a former student who now teaches. In a four-hour drive up Highway 99 with a bouquet in the back seat.

Today the Milan Institute community — colleagues, students, alumni, and industry partners — joins in celebrating Lynnette Garrett, an educator whose work reflects the highest ideals of the profession.

Rebecca Rodriguez

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