



**2023 Peace in the Pages
Presented by David and Monique Miller
Award Honorees**

READ TO HEAL

Nicole B. Thomas, FACHE, Hospital President, Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville



Nicole Thomas, FACHE, is hospital president of Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville, responsible for the operational and strategic direction of the largest hospital in the health system. Thomas joined Baptist Health in 2011 and in 2016 was named Baptist Medical Center South's president, becoming the first female and first African American to lead a hospital in Baptist Health's history. Through the years, Thomas has held several system roles at Baptist Health, including co-chairing its diversity, equity, and inclusion council; chairing its transformation council; stepping in as interim chief human resources officer; and serving as senior vice president of specialty services overseeing neurosciences, orthopedics, and oncology, with primary executive responsibility for the formation of Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center in 2015.

Thomas has a Master of Healthcare Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and she received a Bachelor of Science in Public Health Administration from Dillard University in New Orleans. A fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives, Thomas was named among Modern Healthcare magazine's Top 25 Minority Executives in Healthcare in 2018 and 2020 and one of 70 African American leaders in healthcare to know by Becker's Hospital Review in 2020.

Born to teenage parents in Houston, Texas, Thomas was raised by her grandparents, who doted on their smart little granddaughter and sent her to private

school from kindergarten to third grade. There, reading was emphasized and encouraged at every opportunity. For instance, students who could read out loud in front of the class without pausing to sound out words were awarded with a Burger King Whopper. By the time Nicole began attending public school, she was so far advanced that she skipped a grade. “I loved school so much that I held my own private summer school, spreading out my books and treating them like my students,” she recalls. When she got to high school, her grandparents again encouraged excellence, making sure she attended a magnet school that focused on choosing a profession. Her grandmother hoped that Nicole would become a doctor, however, Nicole found her leadership niche in the business of healthcare and has succeeded admirably as a Senior Healthcare Executive.

Today, Nicole Thomas and her husband, Michael, consider her beloved 88-year-old grandmother, Laverne Laviolette, their “Elder Baby,” giving her the daily affection, credit, and respect she deserves.

“Because books played such an important role in my life growing up, I continue to use them as vital tools in my profession,” says Nicole, noting that she gives two impactful books to new members of her team at Baptist Health: *Crucial Conversations* by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler, and *Power of Moments* by Heath and Heath. Both of these books promote better understanding and positive interaction between team members and, to further emphasize the power of the written word, President Thomas holds an annual “Book Club” for her leadership team. Her last book club featured *Change the Culture, Change the Game* by Connors and Smith.

An avid reader leader who uses books to encourage and heal working relationships and thus, strengthen the good work done for our community at Baptist Health, Nicole Thomas is a deserving recipient of READ USA’s 2023 READ TO HEAL Award. “I’m honored to be chosen for this recognition by READ USA,” said Thomas, “and I want to convey my congratulations to READ USA for the huge impact you are having on the lives of children.”