

2017 Volunteer Awards

Summary of Award Recipients

LAMP OF KNOWLEDGE AWARD

Jay Feaster, Tampa Bay Lightning

Jay Feaster is a name known by many in our community, especially by Tampa Bay Lightning fans, as he led the team to a Stanley Cup victory in 2004 as general manager. In the summer of 2014, he was appointed as the Executive Director of Community Hockey tasked with growing the game of hockey among youth in our communities. Under his leadership, his team continues to diligently work under the Build the Thunder umbrella, thanks to a \$6 million commitment under the Industry Growth Fund awarded in the fall of 2015. Jay is currently the Vice President of Community Development. Jay is known as a steadfast leader with a heart for his community. Thank you Jay for your genuine love of our students and community.

TONY DUNGY HONORARY AWARD

King High School - Yuri Higgins, Elite Men of Tomorrow

Yuri Higgins is the founder and head mentor of Elite Men of Tomorrow at King High School. His dedication and hard work to transform young boys to men is the key to his success as an assistant principal. The club consists of 20 male students of various ethnicities, who meet every other week to learn proper etiquette and motivation for success. His main goal is to increase each members' GPA every semester to get them to graduate. They go out once a month to do many community service initiatives as well as field trips to Greco Middle School and Robles Elementary School to mentor boys in grades five through eight. He started the "Dress for Success" day where students dress up in business attire every Tuesday. Mr. Higgins created and runs the group with a caring hand referring to the curriculum as "manhood" curriculum. One of the boys mentioned to a teacher that he now feels like he belongs to a band of brothers that he can depend upon in times of need. Mr. Higgins has made such a difference in the lives of these students.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR OF THE YEAR

Sligh Middle Magnet School - Ciciler Russ

Ciciler Russ has served as the CVC at Sligh Middle Magnet School for the past two years. She began this past summer demonstrating excellence by implementing the First Annual Sligh Student Summer Leadership Institute. She is the founder of student mentor groups for male and female empowerment such as Cougar Crystals (founder), MALE (Males Achieving and Leading in Excellence), and Men of Vision. Her parent meetings and activities such as the Mother/Daughter Tea and "Transformations Through Communication", are meaningful and interactive so that parents are equipped to deal with the challenges of adolescence. Additionally, Ciciler implemented the Father of the Year Award to honor exemplary fathers in the school community and promote male parent engagement. Not only does she secure funding for college tours and family nights, she also conducts weekly volunteer orientations to build the school's volunteer data base as another layer of support to transform the climate and culture of the school. Her selfless efforts to support the transformation of Sligh Middle School has an impact on every stakeholder to help "Prepare Students for Life"!

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT EXEMPLARY PROGRAM AWARD

Oak Grove Elementary School - Seniors in Service, Foster Grandparent Program

The Seniors in Service Foster Grandparent (SSFG) program offers individuals 55 years+ an opportunity to tutor and mentor students. SSFG are an army of retired people that have committed time to area schools to assist them academically. They assist in classrooms, during lunchtime, and with supplementing the additional instructional time that would normally be the responsibility of parents. This caring group of 66 individuals spends time in 28 schools mentoring/tutoring children on an average of 2+ hours a day for a total of 15 hours per week. This adds up to close to 30 thousand hours a year!

Full Service Centers - Olympic Parent: Going for the Gold, 90by20

Hillsborough County Public Schools and the Full Service Centers Department created a District Team (HCPS 90BY20) to participate in the 2017 Publix Gasparilla Distance Classic 5K Run/Walk. The District's participation brought awareness to the strategic priority of increasing our graduation rate to 90% by the year 2020. Students and their families from 150 priority Title I schools, that draw students from impoverished, diverse communities (concentrated focus on 19 high poverty "elevated" schools in the urban and rural area of the district), participated in the 24th annual Publix Gasparilla Distance Classic. Parents attended capacity-building workshops to learn about grade level expectations and graduation requirements. With over 280 participants, the district team won the largest team for 2017!

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OUTSTANDING SCHOOL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR – YOUTH

King High School – Heta Patel

Heta Patel is a role model at King High School and within the community. She is the founder of Drives for Smiles, focusing on offering those in need basic supplies and necessities, not only in the local community, but around the world. Heta helped to collect 2063 pounds of food for Feeding America within 2 months' time and collected over 350 eyeglasses for the New Eyes Foundation. She also donated Indian clothes and medical supplies to a rural Indian clinic during a mission trip, and collected 1000 books toward Books for Africa. With all of this, Heta also recently published a poetry book and the proceeds will go toward Doctor's Goodwill Foundation. Heta is a compassionate leader with a dynamic personality and kind heart.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OUTSTANDING SCHOOL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR – ADULT

Lennard High School – Sharon Gilmore-Barton

A spirit of volunteerism and selfless service are the characteristics that best describe Mrs. Sharon Gilmore-Barton. Through her efforts as Booster Club president she has organized a Lennard school spirit team, recognized as the "*L-Block*". The students that are part of "*L-Block*" attend sporting events to cheer on their classmates and encourage others to get involved in school activities and school spirit. In addition to the countless hours with the Booster Club, Mrs. Barton empowers students as the LHS Junior Class sponsor. Under her mentorship, the class leads the way in school spirit at events such as pep rallies and athletic competitions in addition to numerous service projects. Additionally, Sharon has led the grass roots movement to start a Boys and Girls Club in the school community, garnering support from county commissioners, MacDill AFB, and local businesses. It is difficult to count the number of students that have benefited from Mrs. Barton's influence but it encompasses the entire student body, staff and faculty, and the local community.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OUTSTANDING SCHOOL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR – SENIOR

Cleveland Elementary School – David Porter

David Porter is an outstanding volunteer at Cleveland Elementary, where he dedicates his time, talents, and skills to further enhance students' learning experiences. His contributions include reading to Pre K - 1st grade classes biweekly and volunteering at school wide events such as the annual Fall Festival and Community Field Day. Mr. Porter also assists teachers and staff in various areas of need from shelving books to preparing center activities in classrooms, chaperoning

field trips throughout the year and escorting students to and from the media center for reading programs. One of Mr. Porter's most engaging activities is the school garden. With this project, Mr. Porter helps to nurture the minds and bodies of children while providing enrichment in the area of life science, horticulture, nutrition and wellness, culinary skills and behavioral improvement. He has served at Cleveland for 15 years and his work and dedication is greatly valued by students and staff at Cleveland Elementary School. Mr. Porter is also a D.O.E. winner in this category at the state level!

WARRIOR STUDENT VOLUNTEER AWARD

Chamberlain High School - Madison Eckelman

Madison is a wonderful, selfless student at Chamberlain High School who is a huge advocate for human rights. She started volunteering with the Special Olympics when she was in the 5th grade. Her motivation to get involved at a very young age was that her friend's sister had Down Syndrome. After the Special Olympics, Madison continued her volunteer work by communicating with parents and children about her challenges due to a hearing loss in the 3rd grade and how she dealt with bullying because she wears hearing aids. Her goal was to express to others that having a disability shouldn't hinder them from being successful in life. She is also the current President of Best Buddies and due to her tireless efforts, the club participation has tripled in size within the past 2 years. Her life-long motto is, "Be The Change You Wish to See in The World".

CHAMPION FOR EDUCATION VOLUNTEER AWARD

Knights Elementary School - Rose Curl

Mrs. Curl retired from the school system over ten years ago and volunteers every day helping in various ways to support student success! She is a mentor, a teacher, a helper, an advocate, a support member and a community spokesperson. "Mrs. Curl" or "Oma" as she is affectionately known to students, helps in different classrooms and different areas of the school every day. She meets students each morning to greet them and help them feel better about themselves as well as being a tutor in the "Walk to Success" program. Mrs. Curl is at every PTA meeting, school event, and school function helping where there is a need. She is great with special populations and can often be found supporting a special needs child. She is an advocate for Knights Elementary School and has served faithfully on the SAC team and on PTA for over 10 years. She is one of the strongest community supporters, and does this all with a smile on her face, a bounce in her step and a kind word for everyone she meets.

D.W. Waters Career Center - Marlene York-Monroe and Deborah Raimer, Stork's Nest, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Tau Pi Zeta Chapter

The Ladies of Tau Pi Zeta chapter of Zeta Phi Beta adopted D.W. Waters Career Center in 2011 to work with the Teen Parenting Program. This program serves a population of middle and high school students who are teenage parents and/or students who are about to become teenage parents. The members of Tau Pi Zeta have provided monthly workshops on life topics, and have provided guidance and support in critical areas that will no doubt lead to better parenting, stronger families, and a reduction in the likelihood of a second pregnancy. Tau Pi Zeta also sponsors an annual baby shower where the students are provided with clothing, diapers, toys, and supplies for the babies. They have captured the needs and desires of the students and their commitment is making a positive difference for the students in the Teen Parenting Program at D.W. Waters Career Center.

Van Buren Middle School – Tampa Chapter of The Links, Incorporated

Tampa Chapter of The Links, Incorporated began a partnership with Hillsborough County Schools over 15 years ago. They have mentored at many schools, settling at Sheehy Elementary School and Van Buren Middle School. Since 2009, this organization has engaged 35 8th grade girls annually (Radiant Jewels) at Van Buren. Each month, the mentees are introduced to an individual with a career that involves science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) as well as activities that expose the students to a wide array of topics, such as self-esteem, goal-setting, college readiness,

etiquette, Black History, Women in History, career exploration and first aid. One of the more innovative activities at Van Buren was the Robotics program started with 24 girls after school that quickly expanded to an elective class offered to students during the regular school day. In addition to mentoring girls at both Van Buren and Sheehy, the Links recruited a group of professional men to mentor 40 boys. Tampa Chapter of The Links, Incorporated has made a profound and sustained effect on the lives of students at Van Buren, as well as other schools in Hillsborough County.

FAMILY/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AWARD

Hammond Elementary School – Keys to Kindness, Hammond’s Be Kind Team

The “Being Kind” program was launched at Hammond Elementary School in 2015. Since that time students, faculty, and staff are actively engaged in activities focusing on acts of kindness. In December 2016 the school joined forces with the “Keys to Kindness” organization to place Kind Keys in various communities around the Tampa Bay Area. Students, teachers, administration and staff have distributed over 150 Kind Keys to individuals to remind them to pass on an intentional act of kindness. Kind Keys from Hammond have been given to others as far away as England, Washington DC, Atlanta, and throughout the Tampa Bay community. Since the start of the school year over 25 Hammond Wolf Cubs have been recognized for demonstrating random acts of kindness! Working together to promote kindness allows Hammond Elementary to form partnerships with families and community to reach the goal of spreading kindness together.

Lee Elementary Magnet School – Lena Young Green and Kitty Wallace, Tampa Heights Community Garden

Lena Young Green and Kitty Wallace led a team of volunteers to bring the gardens back to life at Lee Elementary Magnet School. Volunteers from the Tampa Heights Community Garden, Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association, USF’s Stampede of Service, faculty, staff, parents and students rebuilt and extended the gardens to include one garden plot for every Lee Elementary classroom. The mission of the Organic Gardens is to engage students, families, and the Tampa Heights community in project and service-based learning integrating Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Math (STEAM). With gardening, there are multiple opportunities to engage in research in culinary arts, nutrition, and agriculture. Students explore their interests; learn about careers and far-away places and cultures through researching and growing indigenous and nutritious food. Lee parents and the Tampa Heights community are excited about the gardens as teachers spend classroom time teaching lessons geared toward healthy eating and wellness. The gardens instill a sense of community and team-building where students take ownership in maintaining all gardens and students have a sense of pride in their school.

Riverview Elementary School - Heather Arnold

Riverview Elementary has been fortunate to have Heather Arnold as a parent volunteer for the past seven years. She became PTA President four years ago, and does a myriad of thankless jobs for the school. She coordinates parent volunteers, holds monthly Sidewalk Sales allowing students to buy various items, and organizes successful fundraisers. Under her PTA leadership, Riverview Elementary was able to purchase the school marquee, custodial equipment, laptops for every teacher to use in their classroom as well as an inviting mural that covers the entire media center. She volunteers in every possible manner at school – working in the front office, helping in the Media Center, and assisting any classroom in need. Heather’s endless energy and outgoing personality manages to consistently rally the support that makes the school thrive and she is a beloved staple at Riverview Elementary School. Every teacher and child knows and loves “Miss Heather.”

SHINING STAR AWARD

Durant High School - Victoria Isgett

Victoria Isgett is a senior at Durant High School who has accumulated over 1,000 community service hours. Victoria has volunteered extensively in the local community and at Durant High School. She serves as the Basketball Team Manager,

Vice President of Hillsborough 4-H County Council from 2014 to 2016, and was the President of Trail Blazers 4-H club from 2013-2016. One of her most notable community service projects as president was “Blankets for Shriners”. Under her leadership, Trail Blazer members made unique, individual fleece blankets for terminally ill children at Shriners’ Hospital for Children. Victoria has also served over 800 hours volunteering for Chaps Acre Farm, volunteering as a youth instructor, educating children on proper care of animals and basic riding skills. The highlight of her summers of service at Chaps Acres, was the growth of the young riders over a week long camp where many of the children attending were novice riders, and fearful of the horses. Victoria is truly passionate about her service at Chaps Acre Farm. She has demonstrated excellence and dedication in service and is a shining star at Durant and in the local community!

Strawberry Crest High School - Jairang Yarlagadda

Jairang (Jai) Yarlagadda, a senior in the IB program at Strawberry Crest High School, has created a way to assist people who are facing a temporary financial crisis through an interest-free loan program. Jai believes strongly that the usual “pay day loans” that are available to most people only place them into greater financial jeopardy. He and his father brainstormed ways that he could do just that. After hearing a broadcast on NPR that included the fact that 63% of Americans can’t afford an emergency of \$1000 or more, together they came up with the idea for a temporary, interest-free loan program and created the FairPact Foundation. Jai is a self-taught programmer who wrote the code and designed his website by himself. After a summer internship at the Systems Soft Technologies Company, where he refined his coding and designing skills, he launched his website, <http://thefairpact.org>.

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION AWARD

Miles Elementary School - Keith W. Babb III, 2nd C.H.A.N.C.E Center 4 Boyz

2nd C.H.A.N.C.E Center 4 Boyz is a nonprofit faith-based juvenile delinquency and diversion program for at-risk youth. Mr. Babb and his fellow volunteers work with young gentlemen at Miles, providing mentoring, character development, community service and extracurricular activities. They teach etiquette, set goals, organize competitive games that demonstrate good sportsmanship, participate in clean-up activities in the school’s neighborhood and plan visits to local college campuses so that the young boys at Miles can envision higher education in their future. Mr. Babb’s mentoring group, GROWN Man’s School Survival Club stands for: Grounded in values, Redefined by your inside, Owning your actions, Willing to be selfless and Navigated by your purpose. His desire is to build relationships with troubled kids that go beyond a scripted plan. And indeed all of this is a good thing for the male students at Miles Elementary. Mr. Babb’s goal is to redirect young men’s lives so that they can lead successful lives and build strong communities.

Robles Elementary School - Bonnie James, Kingdom Kids of Tampa Bay

Mrs. Bonnie James is caring, dedicated, and generous in giving back to Robles Elementary and the surrounding community. For more than seven years, she has dedicated her life to providing service to Robles faculty, students, parents and the community at large. Mrs. James has logged over 10,000 volunteer hours over the past six years. She has consistently donated food, goods and service for: Family Read Night, Math Night, Veteran’s Day Celebration, Great American Teach-In, Head Start Parent Meetings, faculty meetings and teacher incentives, Parent Reading Workshops, afterschool snacks for ELP (Extended Learning Program), FCAT Programs and SAT testing (hot breakfast for Saturday school), report card celebrations, PTA- Parent Teacher Association Programs, holiday celebrations on and off campus, and classroom projects. She also supports Kinship Care; this program supports grandparents of students whose parents are deceased or incarcerated. Her mission is to mentor students, uplifting them through self-esteem building, parent involvement, academic success, building positive relationships, and encouraging students to come to school. Mrs. Bonnie James is committed to the cause of helping children achieve and become the best that they can be. Robles Elementary is very grateful for Mrs. Bonnie James and her non-profit organization “Kingdom Kids of Tampa Bay”.

Project PROMISE – Title I - Melanie Rimes, SouthShore Chamber of Commerce (Starfish Award)

The SouthShore Chamber of Commerce partnered with Project PROMISE to support several identified needs. One of those needs is dropout prevention of students served by teen parent programs. While Project PROMISE provides support to the district's most delicate student population, which includes teen parents, it takes a village. Upon becoming aware of the need, particularly in the SouthShore area (South County), Melanie Rimes, Executive Director, SouthShore Chamber of Commerce, stepped up to offer their support. She started the SouthShore Educational Partnership Committee that provides a link between the SouthShore business community and the educational establishments of the community. Working directly with the Project PROMISE Truancy Specialist, Mae Engram, The Chamber has truly demonstrated their willingness to help wherever needed. They helped students enrolled in the teen parent program, providing assistance to students in need of diapers and wipes, and donated two desktop computers and two wireless printers to students needing to complete course work at home. In addition, they provide support to the Migrant Program, AMI KIDS Yes Juvenile Justice Program, and Area 8 schools. This partner is befitting of The Starfish Award, inspired by The Starfish Story. They are making a difference.

OUR STUDENTS, OUR FUTURE AWARD

Helen Gilbert

Helen was selected for this award for volunteering her time and professional expertise to enhance educational opportunities in Hillsborough County Public Schools. She is a passionate supporter of public education and ensuring students are on track for college and career success. A mentor in the Hillsborough Education Foundation's Take Stock in Children Program for six years, Helen has gone above and beyond to serve as a role model for her mentees, at-risk students who attend HCPS middle and high schools. She is committed to building long-lasting, meaningful relationships with her mentees, and helping them to reach their full potential.