



Meet the 2018-2019 Award of Excellence Honorees

In February of this year, sixteen schools from across the state of Tennessee received the Award of Excellence for their exemplary service programs. These schools ranged in size and included preK-12, elementary, middle and high schools. As the deadline for schools to apply for the 2019-20 Award of Excellence approaches, Volunteer Tennessee is looking back at the service highlights of these sixteen Award of Excellence Honorees.

Although, 2020 has brought many challenges for schools and service-learning programs, there are always opportunities for youth to be engaged in the improvement of their local communities. We hope this will serve as an inspiration for schools to seek safe and innovative ways to give back in these times.

Some service highlights from the 2018-19 Award of Excellence Schools:

- **Beacon Academy, Collegedale, TN:** Teachers and students at Beacon Academy are committed to helping communities near and far. A group from the school responded to Hurricane Michael by traveling to and setting up a point of distribution in Panama City, Florida. Many of the school's students receive basic Community Emergency Response Team certifications and all students 14 and up are trained in first aid and CPR. To meet local needs, students in grades 6-10 go to a local food pantry once a week to feed families and sort donations.
- **Central Magnet School, Murfreesboro, TN:** Central Magnet School is dedicated to the development of the whole child, which includes giving to others. Students volunteer and collaborate with many local organizations to make an impact. The high school HOSA and biomed classes coordinated four blood drives during the school year and two over the summer. These efforts were used to save at least 741 lives. Thousands of items were collected when the Beta Club coordinated a canned food drive for local homeless shelters.
- **Dover Elementary School, Dover, TN:** Every year, Dover Elementary holds the premier Veteran's Day Program in Stewart County. They coordinate with the American Legion and VFW, the mayor's office and the superintendent of schools' office. The program is attended by about 50 veterans, elected officials, parents and friends, 500 students and the Stewart County High School band. Students from grades pre-K through 5th hand each veteran a certificate of appreciation.
- **Ensworth School - High School Division, Nashville, TN:** Ensworth High School Students work with 40-50 non-profit partners throughout the year to help fulfill part of the mission of the school, which includes being contributors to society. One on-going project is called "My First Books", where students write, illustrate, and publish original children's books in French and Spanish. These original texts have been shared with an orphanage school in Haiti and other locations in need of children's books.



Central Magnet School



Ensworth School

- **Friendship Christian School, Lebanon, TN:** Friendship Christian's State of Love campaign is the school's annual fundraiser, and 10% of the funds are allocated for service-learning. Last year, the primary focus was for students to connect with a local public school's afterschool food program. The high school students researched the need and organized two packing parties to create food backpacks. Students also collect food, socks and hygiene products for the homeless, and collect feminine hygiene products for girls in the Nashville area and developing countries.
- **Jackson Central-Merry Early College High School, Jackson, TN:** Students from Jackson Central-Merry served their community by painting murals on a wall at the Juvenile Detention Center and painting cartoon pictures on the classroom doors of a newly renovated elementary school. They have planted trees, flowers, and built a garden at the school. Students served those in need by volunteering at the food pantry, delivering cookies to neighborhoods around the school, and collecting canned food items for the college food pantry.
- **Jefferson County High School, Dandridge, TN:** During a year it is not uncommon for Jefferson County High School's Service-Learning class student to log over 7,500 hours of volunteering time. Some of their newest service projects include a theater program and art show for students with disabilities, targeting elementary students for increased literacy efforts, spreading awareness about human trafficking and safe choices in college, assisting with animal welfare efforts by fundraising for spay and neuter programs, and raising awareness about adoptable pets.

- **Johnson County High School, Mountain City, TN:** The students at Johnson County High are committed to volunteering their time to help the community. A few previous projects include: organizing Red Cross blood drives, decorating pumpkins at a nursing home, visiting elementary schools to read to children for Read Across America Day, providing a photo booth and setting up for the 50's Fun Day at the Johnson County Senior Center, and running carnival games as a fundraiser for the Johnson County Imagination Library.



Johnson County High School

- **Lipscomb Academy, Nashville, TN:** Since 2015, every Lipscomb Academy student has been required to complete a service-learning project, helping prepare them for a life of service. In pre-K to 4th grade, students work with teachers to complete a service project in partnership with a nonprofit. In the middle grades, each grade works to volunteer with a local elementary school, an international school, or a clean water organization. In high school, students work through a self-directed service-learning project of their choosing their senior year.
- **Middle Tennessee Christian School, Murfreesboro, TN:** Service is a Core Foundational Principle at Middle Tennessee Christian. Students made a difference through serving meals to the homeless, teaching special needs kids how to play baseball, and through the mission trips where they mentor at-risk children in Miami and build houses for families in Central America. The school also dedicates one school day every year to service, where all students participate in small group projects throughout the community.

- **South Knoxville Elementary School, Knoxville, TN:** South Knoxville Elementary hosted two community clean-up days at the school. During these events, they planted eight raised beds and a community garden used by all stakeholders surrounding the school. The students plan, lead, and directly worked on the project. The community facade has changed in a positive way and trash clean-up has become a thing that is done weekly and not just part of big events.



South Knoxville Elementary

- **South Pittsburg High School, Pittsburg, TN:** The school Interact Club students live the club motto “Service above Self”. A few of the club’s projects included: picking up trash during the annual River Rescue, partnering with a senior facility to serve Thanksgiving dinner and to carol and provide gifts at Christmas, and providing one-on-one mentoring at the elementary school. They have also raised funds for hurricane victims and to support people that have been diagnosed with Leukemia or Lymphoma. They also raised \$1,000 dollars for the End Polio Now fund.
- **Unaka High School, Elizabethton, TN:** The students of Unaka High School demonstrated exemplary volunteer work and service to the school and community. Each extracurricular group at the school participated in volunteerism. The football team completed various projects throughout the summer assisting local churches or elderly individuals. The Key Club was very active in helping with Kiwanis sponsored events and various community activities. The Beta Club was involved in recognizing key school stakeholders every month.
- **Union Elementary STEM & Demonstration School, Gallatin, TN:** Union STEM serves local organizations in many ways. The Egg On It program provided over 300 dozen eggs to the Sumner County Food Bank. Students provided dozens of children with gently used shoes, collected over 1,600 pairs of new socks for the Nashville Rescue Mission, and donated over 200 coats for families in need. Clothing donations have enabled many struggling veterans and service men to provide clothing for their families, and canned food donations to Second Harvest have helped feed hundreds of families.
- **University School of Nashville, Nashville, TN:** Service programs at the University School of Nashville are initiated by student interest and student initiative. One project is the student-led Community Action Day, which is one of the school’s largest community projects. Students also hold food drives, raise funds, and volunteer with community partners throughout Nashville. For one of their newest service initiatives, they began a reading program at Whitsitt Elementary School. This led Whitsitt Elementary to see a decrease in absences among the students who participate in this program.
- **Whitwell High School, Whitwell, TN:** Whitwell’s Interact Club completes over 70 service projects a year. Their international community service provides children across the world with books to improve literacy, the chance to be polio free, and have clean water. In their community, they help keep waterways clean, help with literacy projects, and strive to make our world a better place.



Union Elementary STEM



Whitwell High School

Volunteer Tennessee was honored to recognize these schools for their service and looks forward to continuing to shine a light on the service efforts of Tennessee’s K-12 schools. **The [2019-20 Award for Excellence application is open](#) and applications are due by September 11.** Schools can [find more info and apply here](#).

[Volunteer Tennessee](#) is a 25 member bipartisan board appointed by the Governor to encourage volunteerism and community service. Volunteer Tennessee pursues its mission through administration of AmeriCorps grants, training and collaborations and coalitions with public and private organizations interested in volunteerism and service. Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).