

# LOUISIANA OUTSTANDING SCHOOL SUPPORT *Employee*

The Louisiana Department of Education recognizes that outstanding school support staff are critical to school success. Through the [Outstanding School Support Employee Award program](#), the Department recognizes and celebrates some of the state's most exceptional teacher aides, paraprofessionals, school bus drivers, food service workers, clerical workers, custodial/maintenance workers, or any other school support employee classification. This program provides an opportunity to acknowledge those support staff employees who are playing an integral role in school and student success.

*Congratulations to these outstanding educators!*

## 2025 OUTSTANDING SCHOOL SUPPORT EMPLOYEE OVERALL HONOREE



*Donella Wagner*

Custodial • Raintree Elementary School  
St. Mary Parish

**Donella Wagner** is the Head Custodian at Raintree Elementary School in Baldwin, Louisiana, where she has dedicated over 27 years to maintaining a safe, clean, and welcoming learning environment. Beginning her career as a substitute employee in 1997 at Franklin Senior High School, Donella quickly earned a full-time position and played a key role in the opening and re-opening of multiple schools in St. Mary Parish, including West St. Mary High School, Baldwin Elementary, and Thomas Gibbs Elementary.

Her leadership extends beyond custodial duties—she serves as a liaison between staff and administration, ensuring seamless operations and advocating for the well-being of students and faculty. Donella's commitment to the school community is evident in her creation of a uniform closet, which provides essential clothing items to students in need. She also plays an active role in student engagement, volunteering for bus duty and mentoring young boys through the Boys 'n Bow Ties program.

The Boys 'n Bow Ties program was established to provide young male students with positive role models and guidance, helping to deter gang-related influences while instilling confidence, respect, and leadership skills. Through mentorship, character-building activities, and etiquette lessons—including the symbolic act of wearing a bow tie to represent self-respect and discipline—Donella and other program leaders strive to create a sense of pride and belonging among participants. She actively supports the boys in their academic and personal growth, ensuring they have the encouragement and resources needed to thrive.

Beyond the school, Donella is deeply involved in her community. She is a dedicated member of The Bahamas, a nonprofit supporting nursing home residents, and serves as the Bible Study Coordinator at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Jeanerette. Her unwavering dedication to both education and community service has made her an invaluable asset to Raintree Elementary and beyond. Donella Wagner's passion, leadership, and service exemplify the impact of a true community pillar.

# LOUISIANA OUTSTANDING SCHOOL SUPPORT Employee

## 2025 DIVISION-LEVEL FINALISTS

### ELEMENTARY HONOREES



**Bettie Jean Carter**  
DeSoto Parish

**Bettie Jean Carter** is a dedicated literacy paraprofessional at Mansfield Elementary, where she has served the community for over 50 years. After retiring as a teacher, Carter transitioned to her current role, supporting K-4 students who are reading below grade-level benchmarks. Known for her commitment to excellence, she delivers differentiated lessons and individualized interventions to ensure academic progress. Carter's extensive experience includes roles as a TAP mentor, grade-level chairperson, and educator across multiple subjects and grade levels. She is also an active volunteer in her church, leading youth programs and teaching Sunday School. Carter's professionalism, kindness, and leadership make her a valuable asset to both her school and community, where she fosters a positive and supportive learning environment for students and families.



**Sherrill Donald**  
Jefferson Parish

**Sherrill Donald**, also known as "Mrs. Sherrill," is a dedicated paraprofessional at Emmett Gilbert School of Excellence. Since the school's inception, she has played a key role in fostering a positive and supportive environment for staff and students. As Proximity Facilitator, she ensures effective communication with the Proximity Teacher and proactively addresses scheduling, grading, and student support. Donald is also the lead chairperson of the School Involvement Committee, organizing events to promote student well-being, and contributes to the Athletics Committee. Her adaptability and work ethic extend to covering classrooms and lunch duty as needed. Donald offers personal support to students, including assisting with their hairstyles and helping them feel valued. Outside of school, she volunteers in her community, leads at Regular Baptist Church, and runs Rellbraidit and Sweet Kravins LLC. Donald is respected for her leadership, dedication, and commitment to creating an inclusive environment at Emmett Gilbert.



**Laura Jackson**  
St. Landry Parish

**Laura Jackson** is a dedicated paraprofessional at Palmetto Elementary School with 21 years of service. Known for her leadership and compassion, she plays a key role in special education and has led numerous programs, including the 4-H club, Veterans Day Committee, and Black History Month events. Jackson coordinates school dances and awards ceremonies, fostering pride and inclusivity. She also drives the Accelerated Reading Program, securing community donations to promote literacy and reward student achievement. Jackson consistently supports students by providing resources from her own pocket and ensuring their well-being. Outside of school, she serves as a deaconess and Sunday school teacher at New Pilgrim Baptist Church, volunteers at nursing homes, and strengthens connections between the school and community. Jackson's dedication, leadership, and selflessness have made a lasting impact on Palmetto Elementary and her community.



# LOUISIANA OUTSTANDING SCHOOL SUPPORT Employee

## 2025 DIVISION-LEVEL FINALISTS

### MIDDLE SCHOOL HONOREES



**Rodney "Bean" Tabor**  
Lafourche Parish

**Rodney Tabor** is a dedicated custodial staff member at Sixth Ward Middle School, known for his attention to detail and positive attitude. He ensures a clean, welcoming environment while actively engaging with students, offering encouragement, and supporting them at games. In addition to his custodial role, Tabor serves as Assistant Football and Basketball Coach, providing mentorship both on and off the field. Outside of school, he has been a volunteer firefighter since 1999. Currently, he holds leadership roles as President and Assistant Chief of the Lafourche Crossing 308 Fire Company and President of the N Thibodaux Fire Company. He plays a key role in rescue operations and community events, including the Firemen's Fair. Tabor's willingness to assist colleagues, coaches, and the community, along with his positive, can-do attitude, makes him a valued leader both at school and in his community.



**Mary Anne Ladner**  
St. Tammany Parish

**Mary Anne Ladner** is an invaluable asset to St. Tammany Parish Schools and is dedicated to supporting visually impaired students. As the district's sole Brailist, she transcribes instructional materials into Braille, including ACT practice books, foreign language texts, and complex math content. She also creates tactile graphics, such as maps and diagrams, to enhance students' spatial understanding. Inspired by her own visually impaired child, Ladner became an advocate for accessibility, working closely with educators and mobility specialists to develop tools that foster independence, like tactile school maps. Her meticulous work ensures visually impaired students have equal learning opportunities alongside their peers. Ladner's contributions have significantly impacted students' academic success, particularly those pursuing higher education in STEM fields. Through her expertise and dedication, she continues to transform lives, making education more inclusive and accessible for all.



**Rhonda Whitfield**  
Bienville Parish

**Rhonda Whitfield** is a dedicated and professional food service worker at Ringgold Junior High School, recognized for her exceptional reliability and strong work ethic. With many years of experience, Whitfield has earned a reputation as one of the most dependable food service technicians in Bienville Parish. Her commitment goes beyond her regular duties, as she actively supports teachers, students, and the larger school community. She often assists with after-hours events, serving athletic teams and clubs with enthusiasm and care. Whitfield builds positive relationships with faculty, staff, and students, earning their respect through her friendly demeanor and collaborative approach. Her ability to adapt to various tasks and situations makes her an invaluable team member. Outside of her work at the school, she is also an engaged participant in the local community, taking part in numerous activities and initiatives.

# LOUISIANA OUTSTANDING SCHOOL SUPPORT Employee

## 2025 DIVISION-LEVEL FINALISTS

### HIGH SCHOOL HONOREES



**Pauline Toussaint**  
Evangeline Parish

**Pauline Toussaint** is a powerhouse of passion, purpose, and progress as a dedicated clerical employee at Evangeline Parish Media Center. With an Associate of Arts in Information Systems from Grambling University, she fuses tech-savvy brilliance with unmatched dedication by providing students and educators with resources to enhance lesson delivery and student engagement. Toussaint mentors Special Education teenagers in the Work-Based Learning Program to develop critical life and career skills. Notably, she fostered powerful community partnerships with the LSU Ag Center and Louisiana Swamp Pop Museum. With the Y.O.U. program, she launched real-world experiences connecting 800+ disadvantaged high school students to professionals, colleges, military bases, and leadership roles. Students partnered with locally owned businesses, bankers, and public officials, working 10 hours weekly after school. She contributes to initiatives like the Coffee Talk School Attendance Incentive Program and has volunteered for over 30 years in numerous leadership positions with her church. Toussaint embodies a commitment to student success, community engagement, and professional growth.



**Eva Davis**  
Calcasieu Parish

**Eva Davis** is a dedicated custodian at Iowa High School with over 50 years of service. As head custodian, she ensures a safe, clean environment. Davis has adapted to challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the aftermath of Hurricanes Laura and Delta, successfully leading her team through disruptions. Beyond her custodial duties, Davis is committed to the well-being of students and staff. She coordinates the Food for Thought program, providing food support to at-risk students, and actively participates in school events, fostering school spirit. She is also a member of the Iowa Senior Citizen group and organizes celebrations to boost staff morale. Davis is recognized for her unwavering dedication to creating a supportive and caring environment at Iowa High School, earning the respect and admiration of the school community.



**Mary Lea Dunn**  
Ouachita Parish

**Mary Lea Dunn** is a powerhouse of dedication and heart at West Ouachita High School, where she serves in the ROTC department as a paraprofessional. From expertly managing uniform orders to organizing a monthly baked potato fundraiser that raises over \$12,000 annually, Dunn keeps the program running with excellence. She ensures the department is inspection-ready and every student has the support they need to succeed. Beyond her role, she founded "Chief's Hungry Hideout" snack pantry and a clothing closet for needy students. She plans enriching educational trips to cities like Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Pensacola, and Houston, broadening students' horizons. With strong community ties, she secures local partnerships to support her initiatives. Celebrated for her positivity, leadership, and tireless work ethic, Dunn was honored as Support Employee of the Year. She will also graduate from Liberty University this year with a degree in Education—an inspiring example of service and impact.