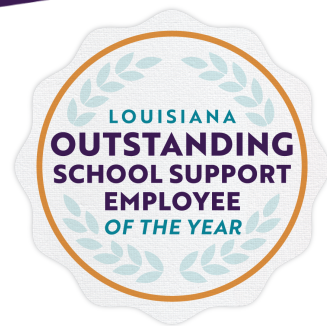




Sample Application

Outstanding School Support Employee of the Year

BIO:

Donella Wagner serves as the Head Custodian at Raintree Elementary School in Baldwin, Louisiana, where she has dedicated over 27 years to creating a clean, safe, and welcoming environment for students and staff. She began her career in 1997 as a substitute at Franklin Senior High School and quickly earned a full-time position through her strong work ethic and reliability. Since then, she has played a vital role in the opening and re-opening of several schools in St. Mary Parish.

Donella is more than a custodian, she is a campus leader and community advocate. She established and manages the school's uniform closet to support students in need, and she volunteers for morning bus duty to greet each child with kindness, often setting the tone for their entire day. As a mentor in the *Boys 'n Bow Ties* program, she helps guide young boys toward positive choices, emphasizing respect, leadership, and self-worth.

Outside of school, Donella continues to serve. She volunteers weekly at local nursing homes through *The Bahamas*, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting the elderly. At Mount Calvary Baptist Church, she coordinates youth Bible Study, sings in the senior choir, and provides meals to those in need.

Donella's compassion, humility, and quiet leadership have earned her deep respect across schools and the wider community. Her daily commitment uplifts those around her, making her a true pillar of service and an inspiring example of dedication in action.

WRITTEN REFLECTION QUESTIONS: In 500 words or less, respond to each of the writing prompts.

1. **Work performance and skill:** Describe how the candidate demonstrates excellence in their role.

Donella's journey to becoming Head Custodian at Raintree Elementary is a testament to dedication, growth, and pride in her work. After a decade as a seamstress at a local textile mill, she transitioned into education as a substitute food technician. Her strong work ethic stood out immediately, and she was personally invited by a respected custodian, now Mayor Pro Tempore Lester Levine, to join his custodial team. From substitute to full-time employee, Donella earned her leadership role through consistent excellence.

Before most alarm clocks go off, Donella is already at Raintree Elementary by 5:45 a.m., ensuring every light is on, every area is secure, and every space, from classrooms and restrooms to the gym and front office, is spotless. She's meticulous, picking up even the smallest items like paperclips and wiping down windows to ensure a clean, welcoming space for students and staff.

Her actions not only maintain the school, but uplift it. She volunteers for bus duty, greeting each student with a smile and a kind word that sets a positive tone for the day. No matter how a child begins their morning, from home to the bus ride, seeing Ms. Wagner transforms their day. Her presence shifts the energy, creating a ripple effect of positivity that supports learning and emotional well-being.

Donella's excellence lives not just in the work she does, but in the way she leads with heart, lifting others, nurturing her school, and leaving every space and soul better than she found them.

- 2. School and community involvement:** Describe the exceptional work and involvement the candidate exhibits in their school, community, etc.

Donella's involvement in her school and community is rooted in deep empathy and a calling to serve. She believes every child deserves to learn with dignity, and every elder deserves to age with connection, and she acts on that belief every day.

At Raintree Elementary, Donella noticed many students lacked clean uniforms and basic necessities. In response, she created and manages the school's uniform closet, collecting donations, organizing inventory, and building strong partnerships with local donors. Thanks to her efforts, students receive uniforms, shoes, socks, and backpacks that restore their confidence and readiness to learn. As one parent shared, "Mrs. Donella is a God-send. My child holds her head high wearing her new shoes and uniform. She's ready to learn."

Donella also mentors young boys through Boys 'n Bow Ties, a school program that encourages honor, self-respect, and leadership. She teaches them to dress for success and to carry themselves with confidence. Students once known for fighting now walk taller, proudly choosing kindness over conflict.

In the wider community, Donella is a vital member of The Bahamas, a women's nonprofit that brings joy to local nursing home residents through weekly visits. She provides companionship, games, toiletries, and crafts; reconnecting seniors with joy, dignity, and love.

Donella doesn't seek recognition; she seeks to make people feel seen, valued, and cared for. Through her quiet acts of compassion, she strengthens not only her school, but her entire community, leaving every space and person better than she found them.

- 3. Leadership and commitment:** Describe how the candidate exhibits leadership and commitment to their school, community, etc.

Within the school walls, Donella's leadership is a quiet force that sets a powerful standard. She speaks up for her team, helps maintain strong communication between custodians and administrators, and leads by example in every task. By consistently following directives and holding herself and her peers accountable, Donella demonstrates what it means to be dependable, respectful, and motivated. When challenges arise, she faces them head-on and brings solutions to

the administration without hesitation. Her example drives a culture of trust, teamwork, and excellence, ensuring a clean, safe campus where students and staff can thrive.

But Donella's influence extends far beyond her job description. Her warmth and consistency boost morale school-wide, and her presence uplifts everyone around her. She doesn't lead for recognition; she leads because she cares.

In her community, Donella continues that care through her leadership at Mount Calvary Baptist Church, where she coordinates and teaches Bible Study for youth. She helps young people build a strong foundation in faith, engaging them in learning, discussion, and spiritual growth. She also sings in the senior choir and provides meals to those in need, serving wherever love and help are needed most.

To Mrs. Wagner, leadership isn't about a title; it's about showing up, lifting others, and leading with heart, even when no one is watching. Her selfless example inspires others to work with purpose and live with compassion, creating a ripple effect of goodness in both school and community.

4. **Stakeholder support and respect:** Describe how the candidate is supported and respected by co-workers, students, school administrators, community members, etc., who speak to the candidate's exemplary work.

In every school she's served, Donella Wagner has earned the deep trust and admiration of administrators, teachers, parents, and students alike. Her reputation is built on decades of dependable service, quiet leadership, and unmatched dedication to her craft.

Mrs. Wagner began her journey in 1997 as a substitute at Franklin Senior High School. Her strong work ethic quickly earned her a full-time role, and she has since become the first person called upon for critical assignments. She's been requested by name to assist in the opening and re-opening of several schools, including West St. Mary High School, Baldwin Elementary, Thomas Gibbs Elementary, and Raintree Elementary.

Teachers often say, "You can tell Mrs. Donella has been here," a testament to the sparkle, order, and care she leaves behind. Her work brings not only cleanliness but calm. Principal Marie Cole of Raintree Elementary shares, "When Mrs. Wagner is involved, I have complete peace of mind. I know the work will be done with excellence and heart."

Students light up when they see her. They greet her by name, rely on her kind words, and find comfort in her steady presence. Parents know their children are treated with the same care she would give her own.

Donella is more than respected; she is cherished. Her legacy lives in the schools she has helped open, the lives she's touched, and the quiet excellence she brings to every school community she serves.

5. **Enhances image and success:** Describe how the candidate provides a positive image and contributes to the success of their school, school system, community, etc.

In the schoolhouse, Donella's leadership is a force of nature, profoundly elevating morale among both staff and students. She consistently takes charge, championing her team and fostering strong, seamless communication between custodians and administration. By not only adhering to all directives but also inspiring her colleagues to do the same, she embodies dependability and motivation. When issues arise, she is the first to confront them head-on, and if a problem becomes a burden, she informs the administration without hesitation.

Donella's dedication is evident in a campus that remains clean and safe for all, but her influence transcends her job description. Her passion for her work shines through in every hallway she cleans, understanding its significance for the children who traverse it daily. This sense of ownership and commitment creates a positive atmosphere for everyone at Raintree Elementary. She goes beyond expectations, driving a culture of excellence that inspires others to become their best selves. She is more than a custodian; she is a symbol of pride, professionalism, purpose, and positive outcomes. Her impact is wide-reaching, and her legacy is one of quiet leadership, deep integrity, and lasting influence. When she is at the lead, excellence follows. Donella has expressed that serving the school and community is genuinely her pleasure.

6. **Additional documentation of exceptional work.**

Supplemental materials may be submitted to accompany the written responses and application. (Optional)

- These materials may be in any format, such as a chart, news article, video, photos, etc., and are to be shared as a Google link.
- All materials should be labeled accordingly to clearly reflect the task they accompany.

Mrs. Wagner's work has garnered high praise from educators, administrators, and community leaders alike. One leader shared, "For over 27 years, she has served with grace, grit, and an unwavering devotion to our children. She doesn't just clean buildings; she builds people. Her quiet leadership and deep compassion left a lasting mark on generations of students, families, and educators." Principal M. Cole of Raintree Elementary emphasized Donella's reliability and initiative, particularly during emergencies, noting that she "never shirks responsibilities" and has helped her "be a better administrator." Former principal H. Wilson called her "the heart of our school" and praised her for going above and beyond by decorating the campus and establishing the student uniform closet.

Others echo this sentiment. Curriculum Facilitator L. Rodriguez described her as "dedicated, caring, compassionate, and selfless." Church leader A. Arnold highlighted Donella's faithful service in ministry, youth education, and music at Mount Calvary Baptist Church, saying she consistently "goes above and beyond" for her church community. D. Provost, RN at Maison Teche Nursing Center, noted that Donella "brings joy" to elderly residents during her weekly volunteer visits. Whether supporting students, mentoring youth, comforting the elderly, or assisting fellow staff, Donella uplifts everyone around her.

Her life's work is a reflection of quiet excellence and unwavering commitment to others — making her a powerful and deserving candidate for state recognition.