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VOLUNTEER LOUISIANA ANNOUNCES 2022 CHAMPIONS OF SERVICE

Award winners will be honored during Annual Champions of Service Ceremony on May 24

BATON ROUGE, La. – Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser and Volunteer Louisiana are proud to announce the nine 2022 Champions of Service. The annual Champions of Service Award recognizes outstanding volunteers from seven geographic regions across the state, plus an outstanding AmeriCorps member and group volunteer program.

“Volunteerism shows the strength of character and resilient spirit of Louisianans,” said Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser. “The Champions of Service Awards are just one way we can recognize the impact our volunteers have on their communities. It is a chance to celebrate our volunteers and thank them for lending their time to make a difference for their fellow Louisianans. I am proud to help honor the achievements of our service champions while encouraging others to become active volunteers in their communities.”

The 2022 Champions of Service award winners are:

- **Brianna Cooley – Northwest Champion:** Brianna dedicates her volunteer service to reducing teen suicide rates through her *Kindness is Cool* campaign. Two years ago, Brianna learned of military suicides taking place in her community of Barksdale Air Force Base. She decided it was important to make individuals feel seen, heard, and loved. She began promoting kindness initiatives, which led to a network of community service opportunities and volunteer events throughout the area. She is dedicated to encouraging everyone to show kindness through small acts of giving and service.
- **Aundi Brown and the Ouachita Green Team of Volunteers - Northeast Champion:** Aundi Brown serves as Executive Director of Ouachita Green and leads a team of dedicated volunteers supporting beautification efforts throughout the community. In 2021, Aundi and the Ouachita Green Team of Volunteers engaged 2,636 volunteers, held 41 clean-up and beautification events, and picked up 106,830 pounds of litter from Ouachita Parish communities and roadways. Aundi and the Ouachita Green Team of Volunteers are dedicated to making their community the best it can be and inspiring others to serve.
- **Prentiss Powell – Central Champion:** Prentiss is a retired teacher with a passion for inspiring young minds. He is a year-round volunteer at the Centennial Cultural Center in Olla, Louisiana, where he plans and conducts STEM education camps for children ages 5 to 15. The annual camps, called Rocket Camps, are free for children to attend, and are focused on exposing young people to science and new technology in a fun and relaxed setting. Prentiss has volunteered his expertise at the Centennial Cultural Center for the last five years and uses his service to create a unique educational opportunity for children living in this rural community.

- **Bea Gyimah – Greater Capital Area Champion:** In 2017, Bea formed the America My Oyster Association, a non-profit dedicated to promoting multi-cultural awareness and understanding the diversity of individuals, communities, and cultures throughout America. Her volunteer service through the East Baton Rouge Parish Library led to the creation of an interactive program called “Building a Better America Today.” The program is designed for middle and high school students, college students, and lifelong learners who want to enrich their understanding of the fundamentals of diversity, cultural competency, and empathy.
- **Craig Blackburn – Greater New Orleans Champion:** Craig volunteers with the Down Syndrome Association of New Orleans, GiGi’s Playhouse, Louisiana Special Olympics, and many other organizations. Craig is a positive mentor for families in the Down syndrome and disability community. He engages with families that receive a Down syndrome diagnosis and shares his story own story and accomplishments to help them see how their child can lead a fulfilling and rewarding life. He lives by his motto and inspires others to do the same: Believe in your dreams, work hard, and anything is possible!
- **Kelli Stawecki – Southwest Champion:** Kelli volunteers and inspires others to help the homeless and food-insecure community in Lake Charles through Waters Edge Church. Kelli coordinates feedings, helps with documentation, supports those with medical needs, and lends support in life transitions. She has worked diligently to encourage others to see the homeless in a different light. Kelli has helped hundreds in her community through her service through the Waters Edge Food Pantry and her personal support for the homeless in Lake Charles.
- **David J. Mancina – Southeast Champion:** David has been a volunteer with the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) St. Tammany since 1999. He serves on the Board of Directors as Treasurer of the organization. David has twin brothers living with schizophrenia. He took it upon himself to care for his brothers throughout their entire adult lives. David knows the difficulty of finding appropriate services and support during a time when there were fewer advancements in the mental health field. He has been integral in helping NAMI St. Tammany grow from a small volunteer operation to one with over 25 employees and a \$1.5 million budget.
- **Shelia Revell – Americorps Champion:** Sheila is a U.S. military veteran and a dedicated volunteer team leader for LaVetCorps in Shreveport working tirelessly to serve her community on her assigned college campus and in her larger community. Sheila helped establish and grow the Veteran Student Center at Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College, led fundraising and volunteer clean-up efforts following Hurricane Ida, and served as the liaison to south Louisiana college campuses to get supplies to those in need following the storm. She started working with the Vaccine Equity Project in April 2021 to inform others about the benefits of vaccination against COVID-19. Sheila felt compelled to remove barriers to healthcare access and promote understanding throughout her community after suffering the loss of many friends and family members.
- **GBR Food Bank Volunteer Leaders – Volunteer Group Champion:** The GBR Food Bank Volunteer Leaders is a vital volunteer support team helping manage over 10,500 food bank volunteers annually. The 18 Volunteer Leaders average over 1,000 hours a year each in the warehouse sorting and repacking food distributed throughout an 11-parish service area. This dedicated volunteer group not only works 4-hour shifts almost daily but also assists the staff who oversee food bank operations. They have served tirelessly during both the pandemic and Hurricane Ida and are an integral part of the success of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. The individual volunteers who make up this dedicated group are Bus Culotta, Paul Foretich, Mannie Henderson, Donna Patterson, Dawn Escott, Terry Cormier, Daniel Martin, Julius Mullins, Bill Gros, Michelle Louis, Darryl Louis, Wendy Parish, Jenny Ferrell, Helene Tucker, Richard Tucker, Jerry Normand, John Langlois, and Charlotte Langlois.

“Congratulations to all of our 2022 Champions of Service! Their example should be an inspiration for us all to become more engaged citizens and community servants,” said Judd Jeansonne, Volunteer Louisiana Executive Director.

Volunteer Louisiana, along with Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser and the Volunteer Louisiana Foundation, will honor the award winners through an award ceremony on May 24, 2022. Awards will be presented to the winners in their communities throughout the months of April and May. Those interested in learning more about the 2022 Champions of Service, should follow along on the Volunteer Louisiana [Facebook page](#).

[Volunteer Louisiana](#), located in the Office of Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser, manages 16 AmeriCorps State programs, promotes volunteerism, and coordinates spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers in times of disaster. It is supported by grants from the federal agency, AmeriCorps.

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