



VOLUNTEER LOUISIANA



VOLUNTEER LOUISIANA ANNOUNCES 2020 CHAMPIONS OF SERVICE

Award Winners will be honored at Recognition Event on April 22

BATON ROUGE, La. – Lieutenant Governor Bill Nungesser and Volunteer Louisiana are proud to announce nine 2020 Champions of Service. These Champions of Service were selected from a pool of statewide nominees - people, groups, and businesses in Louisiana - who demonstrate compassion and dedication, leadership and initiative, or innovation and creativity in addressing community challenges while serving others. Volunteer Louisiana recognizes six regional champions as well as statewide AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and corporate champions.

"I am proud to help honor the achievements of our service champions while encouraging others to become active volunteers in their communities" said Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser. "The 2020 Champions of Service, as well as the thousands of other volunteers across Louisiana, show the strength of Louisiana's character and the resilience of our spirit,"

The 2020 Champions of Service award winners are:

- **Ethan Jeffus – Northwest Champion:** Ethan Jeffus of Minden, LA is a High School student who is actively involved with a variety of community organizations, including volunteering with the local food pantry, nursing homes, and also as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer. Ethan currently serves as the Junior Civitan International Director where he started a project collecting socks to give as gifts to residents at a local nursing home during Christmas. This was so successful that for the second year of the project, Ethan grew the sock collection and donations to include Shreveport, Bossier, Minden, Ruston, and West Monroe, which distributed socks to residents in their local nursing homes.
- **Karen E. Burks – Greater New Orleans Champion:** Karen Burks of Metairie, LA has committed numerous volunteer hours teaching financial education to high school students in the Greater New Orleans area. Karen uses her expertise in financial services to teach students the importance of banking, budgeting, and college savings. In 2019, Karen was recognized by *The Whole Truth* magazine's 40 under 40 award which is given annually to highlight young adults who are making a difference in their communities around the country. Karen also serves on the Young Professionals Board Executive Committee with the Greater New Orleans Junior Achievement as well as serving with SCORE in New Orleans, which helps small business owners through business mentorship.
- **Bill Farmer and the Silver Hammers – Capital Area Champion:** Bill Farmer of Baton Rouge, LA is a dedicated volunteer with Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge. Bill coordinates a group of mostly retirees who come out every Monday and Wednesday, rain or shine, to volunteer their carpentry skills with home repairs for the elderly and disadvantaged populations. The Silver Hammers volunteer group have built hundreds of wheelchair ramps in North Baton Rouge, rebuilt over 60 flooded homes and worked on community centers all over Baton Rouge. Without these repairs, many of these residents would live in unsafe conditions or not be able to return to their own homes. The Silver Hammers ensure that these homeowners can stay in their own homes longer and in a safer living environment.

- **Dan Forest – Northeast Champion:** Dan Forest of Sieper, LA has spent more than 27 years volunteering with the American Cancer Society’s Look Good Feel Better program, and more recently at the Cabrini Cancer Center in Alexandria, LA. Dan donates time, travel, makeup and supplies to teach both male and female cancer patients how to handle the side effects of their treatment based on cosmetology principles. Dan has visited patients at the salon or even in their own home or hospital room as well as regularly teaching classes on finding and caring for wings, changes in skin, etc. Dan also gives his patients a Christmas party each year and many of the patients stay in touch with him over the years.
- **June Mire – Southwest Champion:** June Mire of Morgan City, LA has lived the life of paying it forward. Volunteering for many years with food drives and toy drives, June grew to become the “go-to” for helping others in her community. Addressing the growing need for donations and items for a variety of community needs, June founded a nonprofit called Paying it Forward which manages a shop, staffed by volunteers, with items available to anyone for free or at a minimal cost. The shop provides clothing, household supplies, hygiene and cleaning supplies, a free book library, and a Blessing Box which contains nonperishable food. Additionally, June and Pay it Forward support a school supplies and uniform drive, and a Christmas toy drive. Many of the people June has helped over the years come back and support Pay it Forward because June was there to help them when they were in need.
- **John Hickson – Southeast/North Shore Champion:** John Hickson of Slidell, LA began volunteering with the Alexandria VA Health Care System (AVAHCS) Homeless program in Pineville, LA in 2017 through catering for their Homeless Stand Down event, which is a one-day event that provides services to homeless veterans including food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, and other VA services. In his volunteer capacity, John drives over 400 miles, round trip, with a portable kitchen to prepare meals and oversee a group of volunteers devoted to improving the nutritional and physical health of the Veterans in the AVAHC service area. Additionally, John works each year to secure the necessary supplies needed to fill 200 backpacks with daily essentials such as t-shirts, socks, belts, toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc. John has made a significant difference in the lives of homeless Veterans by nourishing their bodies and souls with delicious southern cuisine as well as provide daily essentials such as clothing, personal care items and financial assistance towards rental and utility deposits.
- **Zacchea Small – AmeriCorps Champion:** Zacchea Small of Baton Rouge, LA is in her second year of teaching as a Teach For America AmeriCorps member at Rosenwald Elementary school in New Roads, LA. Zacchea is the only 4th grade teacher of 26 students for the school and teaches all 4 core subjects, English, Math, Social Studies and Science. Despite challenging circumstances, Zacchea continues to see the potential in all her students and demonstrates extreme optimism when approaching challenges. She has observed that a majority of her students have experienced trauma and has worked to better understand the impacts of this trauma on students and its effect on how they learn. She is also pursuing a certification in Special Education because she knows it will allow her to be a more confident teacher with her students.
- **Shirley Williams – Senior Corps Champion:** Shirley Williams of Baton Rouge, LA has been a Senior Corps Foster Grandparent for 15 years with the Discovery Head Start School in Baton Rouge, LA. Shirley, affectionately called “Momo”, provides one on one tutoring to students, helping them with reading skills and guiding them to success. She has always been more than a Foster Grandparent and brings a wealth of knowledge, experience and more importantly dedication to the children and teachers at the site. Shirley shows love and support to all the children and they love her dearly.
- **Entergy Corporation – Corporate Volunteer Champion:** Entergy’s volunteer program, Community Connectors, recruits employees and retirees to serve as volunteers in the communities where they work and live. Entergy supports Louisiana with millions in annual giving and tens of thousands of hours in volunteer services. They also provide practical and targeted assistance that improves the lives of customers. For example, Entergy’s Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Super Tax Day initiative pairs volunteers with nonprofits who can help customers living in poverty file for and receive their EITC

refund, which helps put them on the path of economic self-sufficiency and stability. Entergy is known for its collaborative approach to public service, working with hundreds of non-profits across the state, and has been recognized with national awards for service, including The Civic 50 which is a list of the most community-minded companies in America.

“We are excited to recognize the contributions of these everyday heroes and raise the profile of service and volunteerism in our great state,” said Judd Jeansonne, Executive Director of Volunteer Louisiana. “There are volunteers and national service members in every community who work tirelessly to improve the lives of Louisiana residents.”

Volunteer Louisiana, along with Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser and the Volunteer Louisiana Foundation, will honor these winners at the Champions of Service Awards Luncheon during National Volunteer Week in April.

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 Corporation for National and Community Service.