



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 19, 2021

VOLUNTEER LOUISIANA ANNOUNCES 2021 CHAMPIONS OF SERVICE

Celebrating the impact of volunteer service in our communities during National Volunteer Week

BATON ROUGE, La. – Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser and [Volunteer Louisiana](#) are proud to announce the ten 2021 Champions of Service during National Volunteer Week, April 18-24, 2021. The annual Champions of Service Award recognizes outstanding volunteers from seven geographic regions across the state, plus outstanding AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Corporate volunteer programs.

“Nowhere else is our state’s character and resilience of spirit more evident than through the volunteers we have here in Louisiana,” 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 2021 Champions of Service award winners are:

- **Ashini Modi - Northwest Champion:** Ashini is a student at Caddo Parish Magnet High School who founded The Reading Rainforest – a library program at The Providence House Homeless Shelter – to give kids the tools they need to build their literacy skills. She later expanded this initiative to include a program called “Students to Scientists” to conduct science workshops at homeless shelters, public libraries, and virtually.
- **Brooke Foy - Northeast Champion:** Brooke is an assistant professor at the University of Louisiana at Monroe and volunteers with various organizations to promote the arts. She teaches art workshops, spearheads public art projects, and volunteers with various festivals and events.
- **Laura Strahan - Central Champion:** Laura has served with the Louisiana 4-H Foundation and as a school club leader for the past 30 years. She’s led fundraising efforts, served as a project mentor, and hosts workshops to ensure students stay involved and succeed in 4-H.
- **Tommy Little - Southwest Champion:** Tommy is a resident of Sulphur but is known throughout Southwest Louisiana for his constant volunteerism. He can be found volunteering at most festivals in the area, but a main focus for Tommy is seniors. When COVID-19 hit, he created Parking Lot Bingo to provide a safe way for senior citizens in the community to socialize.
- **Layne McDaniel - Greater Capital Area Champion:** Layne’s volunteerism is centered around financial literacy and mentoring for children. He serves in multiple capacities, including the Chair for Greater Baton Rouge and Acadiana Board of Directors of Junior Achievement and as a high school mentor for the Trust Your Crazy Idea competition.

- **Aisha Stewart - Greater New Orleans Area Champion:** Aisha was one of the first volunteers to join the HandsOn New Orleans Serve Our Seniors meal distribution program. As she continued to volunteer, Aisha took on more responsibility and soon was in charge of overseeing meal preparation and orienting volunteers.
- **Nathan Richard – Southeast/Northshore Champion:** Nathan is known across Louisiana for his culinary skills and being named the King of Louisiana and American Seafood in 2019, but he’s named the Southeast Champion for his service as a volunteer firefighter with the Thibodaux Volunteer Fire Department. He is a founding member of the First Responders Relief Team and leads fundraisers to address various needs for first responders.
- **Joshua Varise - AmeriCorps Champion:** Joshua is serving in his second year with City Year Baton Rouge as a Service Leader at Melrose Elementary School. In this role, he supports the other AmeriCorps members and supports students with their ELA and math as well as providing social emotional support.
- **Mary Alice Pea - Senior Corps Champion:** Mary is a dedicated foster grandparent in Northwest Louisiana. She is always willing to go the extra mile, even for tasks outside her foster grandparent duties like providing meals to meet community needs.
- **Origin Bank - Corporate Volunteer Champion:** Origin Bank’s volunteer program, Project Enrich, was founded in 2013 and provides an avenue for their employees to make a difference in their communities. Project Enrich volunteers build homes, work with students, serve at local events, and provide disaster relief.

“Despite all the challenges of this past year, volunteers continued to step up and make a difference in Louisiana,” says Judd Jeansonne, Executive Director of Volunteer Louisiana. “We are proud to recognize these 10 outstanding champions for their distinguished service and accomplishments.”

Volunteer Louisiana, along with Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser and the Volunteer Louisiana Foundation, will honor the award winners on social media during National Volunteer Week beginning today. Awards will be presented to the winners throughout April and May. Volunteer Louisiana will host a recognition ceremony for all of the winners in the fall. For images of the 2021 Champions of Service, contact Kori Chisham at kchisham@crt.la.gov.

[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.