Bath County Schools has a finalist for statewide Fred Award

Frankford, Ky – The Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA) named Steve Thornsburg, custodian at Crossroads Elementary School (CES) in Bath County, as one of three 2020 Fred Award finalists.

The Fred Award is a favorite for KASA members, drawing in nominations from school districts across the commonwealth each year. The award, inspired by Fred Shea, the postman who became the subject of Mark Sanborn’s national best seller, The Fred Factor, recognizes non-administrative staff statewide whose daily efforts are deemed extraordinary and integral to a positive learning atmosphere in their school communities. Finalists for this award must embody four guiding principles: makes a positive difference each day; has a heart for people; changes ordinary moments into memorable ones; and leads by example.

Mr. Steve, as the students at CES call him, is the first person in the building each day. He waits at the door to greet every cook, teacher, and student who enters. Not only does he greet them, he knows each one by name. He has mentored countless students, teaching them the value of hard work and respect simply by asking them to be his helper. In many instances, you will also find him sitting in the hallway with a student reading a book. He visits classrooms around the building, sharing his expertise when teachers ask him to talk to students about the importance of conserving school resources and taking pride in your work. Younger students call Steve Papaw. It is not unusual to see him reaching out his hand to walk them safely into the building or see him leaning over to help them in the cafeteria.

“Whether it be bringing some extra towels or trashbags to building a bench for students to paint, bringing his own grill to cook special meals for students or pulling money out of his own pocket to buy a bicycle, Mr. Steve does so with such energy that inspires us all to take pride in our building and our day to day tasks,” said Lorinda Jamison, CES principal. “You will find no truer embodiment of the Fred Award than our very own Mr. Steve. In fact, the award could honestly be named the Steve Award.”

“Freds are change agents who help determine the culture in their schools,” said KASA Executive Director Dr. Rhonda Caldwell. “They freely share the gift of encouragement to those who need it most. They give immeasurably more often at personal expense and sacrifice. They are quiet leaders with unofficial titles who unknowingly weave a legacy of greatness around them.”

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A blue-ribbon judging panel representing education leaders from school districts across the state chose three finalists for the 2020 award. Each finalist will receive a $250 check, overnight lodging at the Galt House Hotel, and a distinguished marble plaque detailing the award. The winner will receive a $500 check.

The two finalists joining Steve include:
- Melvin Bell, Custodian, LaRue County
- Karen Ellison, Instructional Assistant, Casey County

“The Fred program, now in its 13th year, seeks to honor support staff who are the heart and soul of our public schools today. KASA is proud to partner with author Mark Sanborn and American Fidelity to recognize Freds across the state. This year’s awards will expand the program’s reach to 40 school districts statewide,” said Caldwell.

KASA is the largest school administrator group in Kentucky, representing more than 3,100 education leaders from across the commonwealth. Formed in 1969, KASA connects education leaders to policymakers, legislators, and other interest groups and provides numerous benefits and services to Kentucky’s school administrators.

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