Frankfort, Ky – The Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA) named Karen Ellison, instructional assistant at Liberty Elementary School (LES) in Casey 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.

Miss KK, as the students at LES call her, can brighten the cloudiest day. She begins each day in the rain, sleet, drizzle, or sunshine to open car doors during student drop-offs. She greets each child by name with a big smile as she helps him or her out of the car. She loves the students as though they were her own. She understands not all students get hugs at home, so she makes sure they are loved big while at school. If you are having a bad day, Miss KK is the one who can make it better. Her energy is contagious and makes a huge impact on her school and the students she serves. Giving to others, investing in student achievement, and providing encouraging words are just a few of the ways she builds successful relationships.

“Karen can take the ordinary and turn it into extraordinary for our students. She thrives on doing what excites the students - making them laugh and love being at school is what she is all about” said David McFadden, LES principal. “She is an inspiration to our staff, students, and families. She provides a sense of calm for many of our parents. They know if Miss KK is around their children are in safe hands.”

“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 Karen include:
- Melvin Bell, Custodian, LaRue County
- Steven Thornsburg, Custodian, Bath 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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