LaRue County Schools has a finalist for statewide Fred Award

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Frankfort, Ky – The Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA) named Melvin Bell, custodian at Hodgenville Elementary School (HES) in LaRue County, as one of three 2020 Fred Award finalists. After a long battle with cancer, Melvin passed away just prior to the finalists being named.

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.

Melvin Bell was an inspiration to everyone with whom he came into contact. His work ethic was second to none. In addition to the endless hours he spent preparing the building for the next day, Melvin put even more time into building relationships with students and staff. Even the custodians who worked under him work hard to emulate his example. Melvin had a way of making everyone around him want to be a better person and live up to the expectations he held for himself and everyone else.

“Melvin had such a heart for our kids, and he particularly worked to build relationships with the students who seemed to need love the most. He made them understand that no matter what happens in life, there is always a second chance. Melvin always went the extra mile and worked to make the students in our building feel safe, valued, and loved,” said Chris Price, HES principal. “He was the embodiment of what the Fred award is meant to celebrate - he had a strong heart for kids, went over and above the call of duty, was (and still is) admired by his peers, and made a difference in our schools every day.”

“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.”
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 Melvin include:
- Karen Ellison, Instructional Assistant, Casey 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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