

The Volunteer Services Office is proud to spotlight the

Cedar Rapids Community Schools

**VOLUNTEER
HALL OF FAME**

2021-2022

The following individuals were selected by their school volunteer program to represent the many excellent volunteers that generously contribute to the academic success of students at that school.



Profile information is provided by nominating school.

Cedar River Academy Magnet School at Taylor Elementary School

Don Taylor

Don Taylor has been a devoted volunteer for Cedar River Academy at Taylor Elementary since the 2008 flood. He has dedicated his time and effort through many organizations serving CRA and its neighborhood. These organizations include Matthew 25, Taylor Community Access Network, Taylor Area Neighborhood Association and the Trinity St James Church. As a former teacher, coach, and administrator, Don recognizes the dedication and efforts teachers make on behalf of students. He has been committed to making sure the educators at CRA feel appreciated. For example, he has led the effort each year to organize delicious meals and tokens of appreciation for staff at the start of the year, parent conferences, and staff appreciation week. Thank you, Don, for your service to CRA!

Cleveland Elementary School

Maryann Ellis

Maryann can always be seen with a smile and a helping hand. She has served on the PTA board as President and Treasurer, and as membership chair. As coordinator for Box Tops, and Hy-Vee Cash for students, Maryann can be seen counting box tops and receipts. She has been on the planning committee for the end of the year carnival, and the coordinator for the bike giveaway, which has helped the PTA give away dozens of bikes and helmets to students. Maryann has volunteered in the classroom and the library. Maryann has served breakfast to families during Breakfast with a Buddy, helped organize Cleveland's clothes closet, and put together a fun week of activities for Staff Appreciation Week. She is able to work with all teachers and parents to make Cleveland a better place!

Erskine Elementary School

Joanne Bader

When we were without a media secretary this winter, Jo came to the rescue! By coming to our building every day for a few weeks, we were able to keep up with our students reading needs. Jo kept our shelves stocked with returned books, checked out books to students, helped with our weeding process, and so much more! She even earned a new nickname, Library Jo! We are grateful that Library Jo joined our team!

Garfield Elementary School

Kaytie Cousins

Kaytie is always willing to help out Garfield School! Whether it is through PTA or in the classroom, Kaytie is there! She helps keep our book cart program on track and makes sure it's running smoothly. Kaytie serves as the PTA secretary, has helped with the classroom parties, Trunk or Treat, Santa's Secret Shop, Bingo, game nights, the Walk-a-thon, garden and cooking clubs, book fairs as well as the carnival! When Kaytie is not volunteering at school, she leads Girl Scouts! We thank Kaytie for her dedication to the children at Garfield, as well as the Cedar Rapids community!

Grant Elementary School

Barb Anderson

Barb is a wonderful asset to our school. She shares many of her talents with us at Grant. Every spring and fall, she plants and maintains our large flower pots at the front of Grant Elementary. The staff and students always look forward to the new plants. It is such a welcomed sight at the front of the building which brightens our days. During the pandemic, Barb sewed many masks for students and staff to ensure we were prepared when we returned to school. Also, Barb donates multiple school supplies throughout the school year to ensure no students are without supplies. Barb is a cherished member of our school community.

Grant Wood Elementary School

Melanie Jacobowitz

The one constant at Grant Wood Elementary during the challenges of the Pandemic and the aftermath of the Derecho, has been the continued dedication of our team of volunteers which included our choice for OBV, Melanie Jacobowitz. Melanie has quietly led or been part of almost every part of our school for the last seven year which includes classroom support, PTA Secretary, field trips, Santa's Workshop, fundraising, Field Day, 5th grade graduation, teacher appreciation, and conference meals. As a former teacher, Melanie stated, " I know what a difference volunteers make to the lives of students, and to the atmosphere of a building. We have a high rate of volunteerism at Grant Wood, and not only do we support student learning but we also support our teachers so they can do their jobs more effectively." Despite not being able to have volunteers inside our building due to the COVID restrictions, until recently, Melanie never stopped supporting our school. She still coordinated recognition and meals for our staff, helped plan and run very successful virtual fundraisers and supported any events outside or from afar. Principal Cindy Stock added, "Melanie represents those volunteers that are the quieter volunteers but have a huge impact on a school with their ability to build a strong foundation with their behind the scenes work." Volunteerism is such an important part of the vitality of a school. Melanie understands the importance of volunteering as she commented, " It truly takes a village to raise successful humans, and it's extremely rewarding to be part of the Grant Wood village!"

Harrison Elementary School

Don Taylor

After 34 years in education Don retired from being a teacher, administrator, and a baseball coach. He was also a local pastor. He has a passion for serving the neighborhood and advocates for education. He helps deliver and serve meals to the teachers at conference times. Which they really appreciate. He grew up in the NW neighborhood and started his education here at Harrison. He has a passion for whatever it is he is doing and goes all in. We appreciated everything Don has done for everyone here at Harrison.

Hiawatha Elementary School

Pat Rieck

Pat Rieck has volunteered at Hiawatha Elementary for nearly four years. She volunteers, as well as finds and coordinates with the New Covenant volunteers to help with our Study Buddies, which is an after-school program that works with our ELL population. When

students returned to school in the fall of 2020 after being out of school due to COVID-19, Pat organized over 75 backpacks, filled with supplies for our students. She is even known to bring snacks for staff just so they know they are loved. Pat is also wonderful at making loving connections with our students. She helps them with homework and challenges them to practice beyond the required work. She can often be heard laughing with our students, and spending the time to really get to know them. She is a blessing.

Jackson Elementary School

Rachel Klosak

Rachel Klosak is the Outstanding Building Volunteer Nominee for Jackson Elementary. Rachel is an involved parent of three active boys. She has selflessly led the PTA over the course of the last three years. Her service has been at a time, as you know, where all normalcy was thrown out. Rachel has encouraged consistent support for the Jackson community and found creative ways to provide outreach to teachers and students while respecting the guidelines. She is constantly going above and beyond to “make it happen” and adapt to evolving plans. She is already researching, planning, and positioning our PTA for a successful transition into the Maple Grove PTA. Her understanding of what is required to transition will allow us to seamlessly serve our growing Maple Grove community. Rachel’s willingness to “fill in the gaps” allows others to serve and volunteer where they would like to share their time and talents. While after hours of planning and preparations Rachel signs up last – giving her time and talents – where others were not drawn to serve. Her commitment to be so flexible has singlehandedly ensure that events have been held and successful. She is eager to find a way back to old traditions, inviting new traditions from Truman, and blending traditions with our new community to grow a supportive, friendly, active, stable, open, and effective PTA for Maple Grove.

Kenwood Leadership Academy Magnet School

Mary Berns

Grandma Mary started long before this school year helping me to get ready for the year. She did laminating, cutting and organizing materials for me. Each week I would take a bag of “work” for her and pick up the work that she finished. Her favorite thing to do over the time that volunteers were not allowed in the buildings was to laminate- she has said numerous times that it helps her relax. Since returning to the classroom Mary has worked 3 days a week, 6 hours a day helping out with various tasks. She reads with kids, works on letters and sounds with them, organizes all the materials to go home in their folders each week and completes many tasks for other teachers. Above all, Mary’s biggest attribute to Kenwood is the love that she gives our kids. They love “their” Grandma Mary and they miss her when she is gone. She is another constant in their life. Someone who loves on them, someone who cheers them on and someone who cares about them no matter what they have done or haven’t done. Mary is always in their corner and always in my corner.

Pierce Elementary School

Pam Dircks

Pam has been volunteering at Pierce since 2004. She helps in a variety of ways from helping set up classrooms in the fall to supporting students and teachers in a variety of ways throughout the school year. She has chaperoned field trips, worked one-on- one with

students to support writing or reading with students. She helps sharpen pencils and helps prepare classroom materials- a real time saver for teachers! We appreciate how much she has done and continues to do at Pierce!

Truman Elementary School

Jan Mandle

Jan Mandle started Volunteering at Truman during the 19/20 school year. She started working in First Grade and she came every day; no matter the weather. This is important because Jan doesn't drive, but she made the trek daily to support our kiddos. She did one on one work with students, working on math & reading. When school shut down in March, she kept in contact with the school, making sure that she wasn't forgotten, and wanted to volunteer again when the opportunity presented itself. When schools opened up this year, and Volunteers were able to return to the classroom; Jan was here! This year she is working with Kindergarteners. The following is a letter from the classroom teacher, thanking her for what she is doing in the classroom. Jan, Thank you so much for your volunteer work at Truman Elementary with my Kindergarten students. Thank you for contributing so much of your time each week to volunteering in our classroom. We know that you walk an incredible distance to and from Truman to help my students. You always do an excellent job and you are so appreciated. My students enjoy working with letter names and sounds, reading words and reading stories to you. They enjoy writing numbers, counting and practicing addition and subtraction facts with you. I hope you know the priceless impact you have had on their lives. You are a remarkable person with a big heart. We are forever thankful for the time you have given us this year. You have made an unforgettable difference with your smile and encouragement that you bring every time we see you. Sincerely, Mrs. Meisinger & my Kindergarten Kiddos Truman is very grateful for Jan's support of our students.

Van Buren Elementary School

Jessica Nejedly

Jessica is always just a phone call away! Whether we need someone to chaperone a field trip, make popcorn for the entire school or help manage our Book Bonanza program, we can always count on her to get the job done! Having parents chaperone our field trips, provides opportunities for all students to enjoy and engage in memorable experiences in the community. The additional help enables teachers and docents to relay information for the students to carry with them and even apply to their own lives. Jessica has been making popcorn for our school since her oldest child attended Van Buren 13 years ago and she is still going strong! Having this occasional, healthy snack really sparks joy in not only our students, but our staff as well! Having extra hands at our Book Bonanza helps to provide all our students with an increased supply of at-home reading materials! That is definitely a huge benefit with which we can all be onboard! Thank you so much, Jessica, for opening these wonderful pathways, allowing all our students to thrive and pave their own ways to success!

Viola Gibson Elementary School

Eric Christoffersen

Eric Christoffersen has served as an exceptional president of the Viola Gibson PTA for two terms to help us persist through the pandemic and a significant playground improvement project. Through Eric's leadership, the PTA has accomplished a lot in terms of fundraising,

giving back to the school, and supporting Viola Gibson's teachers. Eric led the charge on a \$150,000 playground improvement project. He was there at conceptualization and served as a liaison along with our vice president to meet with district and business leaders to follow through with the project, which was held up by the derecho and the pandemic. He even personally built and installed our new Gaga Ball pits! In the end, we have a playground that is safer, more accessible, and more fun. He also led the charge on our pandemic response, including building physical barriers to place between desks that couldn't be spaced appropriately. These barriers, which Eric built in his garage and worked with other PTA volunteers to place throughout the building, allowed us to create as safe an environment as possible for the return to school in fall 2020. Eric is a consistent and supportive president, allowing others on the PTA executive board to shine and bring new ideas. In addition to his official duties as PTA president, Eric also contributes to Viola Gibson as a Scouts leader, classroom volunteer, and more. Eric has played an invaluable and positive role in keeping our school community healthy and strong despite the trying times we've faced together. His positive impact is felt schoolwide and is appreciated!

West Willow Elementary School

Carrie Campbell

Carrie is the type of volunteer every building wishes they had! She not only volunteers weekly in multiple classrooms, but at evening events, class parties, picture day, or anytime I call last minute to fill in for someone, there truly isn't anything she has not helped with! And every time you see Carrie she has a HUGE smile to greet you and the kids, they love to work with her, and she always goes out of her way to make it extra fun for the kids! Carrie has been a large part of so many PTA and school activities since the day she had a child at Coolidge/West Willow! All the students and staff are very lucky to have her in our corner and her willingness to always step into help anytime!!

Franklin Middle School

Dayna Grantham

The organizational process associated with a middle school show choir in the Cedar Rapids Community School District takes a substantial amount of time and effort from many individuals. With 72 students involved in Classic Illumination (CI) Show Choir at Franklin, one director is not able to tackle the tasks alone. Each year we have wonderful parents who step forward to tackle the organization and collaboration of the CI Parent Committee. This year I have had the distinct privilege of having Dayna Grantham lead the way. Words can't describe her dedication, organizational abilities, leadership skills and her endless support to the students, myself and Franklin. Her ability to get tasks completed, regardless of how difficult or demanding, and the ability to delegate tasks to other parents has been outstanding! Dayna has gone above and beyond to make sure the student's experience in show choir is of top quality. She has also helped build a "community" among the parents which will benefit Franklin and the Choral Music Department in years ahead. Since last September, Dayna has spent hundreds of hours this season making sure the "behind the scenes" duties and responsibilities fall on the shoulders of the parents, instead of the director or students. I highly recommend Dayna Grantham for this year's Outstanding Volunteer Award for Franklin Middle School. Nominated by David Griffin, Franklin Show Choir Director and Vocal Music Teacher.

McKinley STEAM Academy Magnet School

Hunter Leland

Hunter Leland stepped up to help our very young Robotics program at McKinley. He took on the most difficult and technical part of the program, coding the robot, and helped our coding team learn how to write Java. The coding team went on to excel, independently writing all new code without our direct help. Additionally, he was present at every meet and nearly every practice, helping me manage the team logistics and cheering us on! The Leland family even helped make our end of year celebration special by making every team member a robot out of snacks!

Taft Middle School

Julie McMahan

Julie McMahan is a blessing to Taft. Earlier this year, in addition to serving as Taft's PTA secretary, she also started volunteering in the library a couple mornings per week. She quickly saw the needs left in the library post-derecho and jumped in to help return the library to a more organized state. She is excellent about seeing a need, proposing a solution and implementing it. When the librarian was out due to a family emergency for a few weeks, she came in a bit more and opened the library so students could still check out books and keep reading. During this time, she also helped our students with Chromebook issues. All of her help was above and beyond what we had originally asked for as a volunteer. Every day she has great conversations with Taft students about strategies they can use to help them remember to have their Chromebook ready to go for school. She is one of the kindest souls who always interacts with students in positive ways. After accepting the new Media Secretary position, she altered her schedule to make sure she could continue volunteering her popcorn popping services on Fridays.

Wilson Middle School

Kristen Mead

Kristen has been an essential part of the return of Starfleet, the Wilson show choir. She volunteered to help accompany the choir for rehearsals and performances which involves many hours. AND, she volunteered to get all of the girls fitted into dresses, made repairs to those dresses and donated and solicited donations to create a makeup kit. Starfleet could not have gone smoothly without her time and support.

Jefferson High School

Brianne & Nick Ulrich

Outstanding simply isn't enough to describe the hard work and dedication that Brianne and Nick Ulrich bring to the show choir program at Jefferson. This couple is well deserving of our recognition as they represent the wonderful qualities so many of our volunteers demonstrate. They truly care about all of our students and their achievements. Since 2019, they have taken on the monumental tasks of being our "Costume Mom" and "Stage Dad" for our Show Choirs. Brianne has coordinated costume fittings (and refittings...), helped order materials & costume pieces, sewed and organized others to sew homemade costumes, and she has rescued any costume "emergencies" that occurred in our rehearsals and performances. Nick helps load and pull the show choir trailer filled with all of our staging, instruments, and costumes to EVERY competition – sometimes spending time away from his

own family to make sure that he gets our things where they need to go on time. As “Stage Boss,” Nick organizes students and other volunteers to make sure our choirs’ set ups are successful so that their performances go off without a hitch. The Ulrichs are also both instrumental in the massive amount of planning that goes into the Jefferson Show Choir Invitational. They do so much work without being asked beyond the scope of their actual volunteer positions - It’s awe inspiring! Brianne and Nick are great supporters for our students, directors and the entire Jefferson Show Choir program. We can’t count how many times they’ve been present with a listening ear or hug of encouragement or congratulatory high five for our kids. To illustrate how invested the Ulrichs are, they don’t even have a student here at Jefferson this year - and STILL they sacrifice so much making sure we succeed. Plain and simple: their work allows our directors to better serve our students. Our students are better singers and dancers because of Brianne and Nick Ulrich. Our students are also better people because of their example!

Kennedy High School

Sarah Rochleau

Sarah has led our Booster Club through the pandemic, helping procure volunteers in a time when they were hard to come by. She has led our fundraising initiatives, including our annual golf outing, successfully despite derecho and pandemic.

Metro High School &

Outstanding District Volunteer/Governor’s Volunteer Award Honoree

Darryl English

Darryl is a shopkeeper in the NewBo City Market and runs his own tech consulting business here in Cedar Rapids. Darryl's work with METRO originally began as a collaboration with NewBo City Market and our STEAM Academy to engage a student interested in cell phone repair. Darryl took him on as an intern and mentored him providing space and customers in his shop to practice his craft. Darryl has consulted and mentored students in a variety of other projects in our STEAM Academy. Additionally, Darryl has become a regular mentor in our robotics program supporting students' efforts in the national FIRST Tech Challenge robotics competition. Darryl has volunteered his time at robotics events and has logged many hours supporting students' learning and interests in Technical Education.

Washington High School

Brooke DeWolf

Brooke is a wonderful choice as the outstanding building volunteer. In the fine arts area, she has served as PPA President, MOShow Chair for 2 years, and outfitted many ensembles including show choirs, Madrigal Singers and A Slice of Jazz. Brooke has accompanied us many times as a chaperone for our events and ran our Keys to the Future fundraiser which raised \$60,000 for the purchase of our Steinway Grand Piano and was heavily involved in the Take Your Seat fundraiser to purchase new seats for the Little Theater. Brooke has been a positive advocate for the arts at Washington, she will certainly go down as one of the most dedicated and enthusiastic supporters of choral music during my tenure as a choir director at Washington HS. - Peter Westphale



Cedar Rapids Community School District

Every Learner. Future Ready.

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It is the policy of the Cedar Rapids Community School District not to discriminate in educational programs and/or activities on the basis of race, creed, color, gender, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, gender identity, socioeconomic status, national origin, religion, disability, age (except for permitting/prohibiting students to engage in certain activities) or genetic information and in employment opportunities on the basis of age, race, creed, color, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, disability or genetic information. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy, please contact Nicole Kooiker, Deputy Superintendent, and/or Linda Noggle, Executive Director of Talent Management, Educational Leadership and Support Center, 2500 Edgewood Rd NW, Cedar Rapids, IA, (319) 558-2000.