



VOLUNTEER LOUISIANA



VOLUNTEER LOUISIANA ANNOUNCES 2019 CHAMPIONS OF SERVICE

Award Winners will be honored at Annual Gala on April 9

BATON ROUGE, La. – Lieutenant Governor Bill Nungesser and Volunteer Louisiana are proud to announce nine 2019 Champions of Service. These Champions of Service were selected from a pool of statewide nominees - people, groups, and businesses in Louisiana - who demonstrate compassion and dedication, leadership and initiative, or innovation and creativity in addressing community challenges while serving others. Volunteer Louisiana recognizes six regional champions as well as statewide AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and corporate champions.

“Volunteerism shows the strength of Louisiana’s character and the resilience of our spirit,” said Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser. “I am proud to help honor the achievements of our service champions while encouraging others to become active volunteers in their communities.”

The 2019 Champions of Service award winners are:

- ***Mary Jean Lewis – Northwest Champion***
Mary Jean Lewis is a devoted volunteer with Holy Angels, a residential training facility for individuals with disabilities in Shreveport, LA. Mary Jean continuously shows compassion for individuals with disabilities and dedicates her talents to improve Holy Angels, selflessly lending her time every week of the year in support of agency programs and residents.
- ***Emily Leitzinger – Greater New Orleans Champion***
Emily embodies service in anything she does, from serving on multiple boards and organizations in the New Orleans area, volunteering with the Crescent City Café, to producing and hosting a radio show on WHIV, 102.3 FM called “VoluntoldYa!” which brings on nonprofits to tell their stories and solicit volunteers.
- ***Tanya R. Whitney – Capital Area Champion***
Tanya has demonstrated extraordinary public service and community involvement, after retiring from almost 28 years of military service and dedicating her time to volunteering with veterans, especially women veterans, high school athletes as a volunteer coach, helping with events that honor local veterans, and giving speeches on how women in the military helped shape our society.
- ***Mike Shields – Northeast Champion***
Mike is a quintessential community volunteer in the West Monroe area, serving on community boards, helping envision and develop an inclusive playground so children with and without physical and developmental disabilities could play together, volunteering as a regular blood donor, participating in church choir, and supporting numerous other community events.
- ***Ruben D. Henderson, III – Southwest Champion***
Ruben personifies what it means to be a servant leader through volunteering and supporting service projects in his community. Ruben tutors children, serves with the local homeless shelter, participates in beautification and cleanup projects, supports various community events, and serves on nonprofit associations and boards in the Lafayette area.

- **Barbara McKaskle – Southeast/North Shore Champion**
Barbara defines the perfect example of a dedicated public servant through tirelessly volunteering with Keep Hammond Beautiful and recruiting business, service organizations and youth groups to join her in her clean vision for the area. Barbara is also active in her church, volunteering every Sunday, serving at Our Daily Bread, the Tangi Food Pantry, volunteering with the Fuller Center, and serving as a docent at the Columbia Theatre.
- **Jimmie Bryant – AmeriCorps Champion**
Jimmie serves an AmeriCorps member with ShreveCorps program in Shreveport. Jimmie is a true example of peer leadership, always giving his all to make sure the job gets done and done well, inspiring his teammates along the way. Jimmie relates to the children he works with, learning their needs and personality, and creatively engages them in hands-on cooking activities, encouraging healthy eating through community gardening.
- **Ron Griggs – Senior Corps Champion**
Ron is a Senior Corps RSVP volunteer and has dedicated his time and energy to the Chennault Aviation & Military Museum for the last nine years. Ron, a veteran with multiple purple hearts and military awards, volunteers as a mentor to other veterans and active military when they are home, as well as serving on museum boards, helping with events, and supporting museum employees.
- **Shell Exploration and Production Company – Corporate Volunteer Champion**
Shell shares their hundreds of Greater New Orleans staff and their diverse skillsets with the Louisiana nonprofit sector. Through their skilled volunteerism, Shell employees provide nonprofit organizations with much needed services that they would almost never be able to afford.

“There are volunteers and national service members in every community who work tirelessly to improve the lives of Louisiana residents. We want to recognize the contributions of these everyday heroes and raise the profile of service and volunteerism in our great state,” said Judd Jeansonne, Executive Director of Volunteer Louisiana.

Volunteer Louisiana, along with Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser and the Volunteer Louisiana Foundation, will honor these winners at the Champions of Service Gala on Tuesday, **April 9, 2019**, during National Volunteer Week. The event will be held at the Capitol Park Museum. Tickets and sponsorships will be available through the Volunteer Louisiana Foundation at www.VolunteerLaFoundation.org.

Volunteer Louisiana, located in the Office of Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser, manages 17 AmeriCorps State programs, promotes volunteerism, and coordinates spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers in times of disaster. It is supported by grants from the Corporation for National and Community Service.

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