

## Celebrating Support Staff of the Year Nominees

- 🕒 *March 10, 2019*



This week, we are celebrating our first ever outstanding support staff of the year nominees. The program launched this year recognizes outstanding support staff, as we do our outstanding teachers and principals each year. Having high-caliber support staff is essential to the success of our schools and the well-being of our students, and today we celebrate all nominees.

The winner will be announced in April, along with our teacher and principal of the year.

Read what those who know them well had to say about the nominees and congratulate them when you see them.

## Outstanding Support Staff of the Year Nominees



**Wendy Andrews**  
**Special Education Paraprofessional**  
**Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy**

“Ms. Andrews is the kind of teacher, not just special education paraprofessional, I would want for both of my children. She inspires students, not just those with special needs, but all of the students she encounters, to be their very best. It may be with an encouraging comment, ‘You’re going to be great today!’ or a loving admonishment, ‘You’re going to have a better day today, right?’ or even a quick hug or wink as she walks from one classroom to another. She is a positive

presence in our hallways and classrooms. All students know Ms. Andrews and expect that once eye contact is made, are going to hear something uplifting.” — Arlette, Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy TAG teacher



**Autumn Brooks**  
**Administrative Assistant**  
**William Ramsay Elementary School**

“Ms. Brooks has a strong work ethic and doesn’t hesitate to help out a fellow colleague or a student, taking many under her wing, acting as a material figure for them while they are here. Ms. Brooks comes to work every day with a smile on her face and the same positive attitude in her work and in the relationships she fosters with fellow staff. She has a hunger for knowledge and thirst to try something new and constantly shows Ramsay staff, students and parents the TLC we never

knew we needed.” — Jade, William Ramsay Elementary School



**Lavonne Ford**  
**Custodian**  
**Charles Barrett Elementary School**

“Ms. Ford epitomizes what every parent or staff member could hope for in someone serving Alexandria’s children. She is smart, dedicated, kind and driven. Ms. Ford knows every one of our 550 students by name and makes it her mission to ensure they are safe and loved each day. She is known to our school community as always going above and beyond. She stays late to support school events, lends a hand at PTA activities, assists in

student arrival and dismissal and even pitches in at the main office when it gets busy. She is an integral member of our school safety team and is completely committed to our students’ well-being. She is a gift to our community.” — Charles Barrett Elementary School colleague



**Kadysia Gibson**  
**Registrar**  
**Patrick Henry School**

“Ms. Gibson understands what it is like to be on the other side of the desk. She is culturally responsive and understands that many of our parents’ first language is not English. As such, she takes her time explaining the registration process to parents and she’s always ready and willing to go the extra mile. She always tells parents what resources are available to them and points them in the right direction. I have seen parents come in with frowns and

worries on their faces, but after their interactions with Ms. Gibson, they leave our campus with smiles.” — Dorothy, Patrick Henry School teacher



**James Harrison**  
**Building Services Coordinator**  
**T.C. Williams High School King Street Campus**

“Mr. Harrison has improved our school community exponentially. First, he exudes kindness. He knows each of the staff members well and greets us with warm hellos and hugs. These moments make teachers feel loved and appreciated. Because of his ability to build a strong rapport with the faculty, we rely on Mr. Harrison for so much, and he always exceeds our expectations. He has strengthened our school community by

mentoring students. Over the past few years, some of our special education students have been assigned to Mr. Harrison during the school day and he trains these students how to complete different aspects of his own job. Mr. Harrison has taught many students both work skills and life skills, thus changing the trajectory of their lives” — Sarah, T.C. Williams teacher



**Odessa Henderson**  
**Kindergarten Paraprofessional**  
**George Mason Elementary School**

“I get to witness Ms. Henderson’s grace, strength, kindness and commitment on a regular basis. She is an institution at George Mason. She brings consistency and experience to our kindergarten team and the teachers who have been lucky enough to be paired with her over the years. She has impacted the lives of countless students during her many years at George Mason, while guiding and supporting our young learners academically

and socially. She has also touched the hearts of the parents and guided them as well.” — Julie, George Mason Elementary School teacher



**Silvia Navarrete**  
**Parent Liaison**  
**Cora Kelly School for Math Science and Technology**

“Ms. Navarrete’s presence each day makes Cora Kelly a better place for students, parents and staff alike. She is always willing to go above and beyond to support families and does so with a smile on her face. Ms. Navarrete is warm and compassionate and always thinks of what is best for students by supporting their families. Staff benefit from Ms. Navarrete’s work at Cora Kelly as well. Her welcoming demeanor is a joy and the way

in which she works to support staff in her work with families is unmatched.” — Lauren, Cora Kelly School for Math, Science and Technology assistant principal



**Doretha Hood**  
**Head Custodian**  
**Mount Vernon Community School**

“Ms. Hood’s commitment to maintaining the school enables us to host programs and services that support the entire community. She not only takes pride in her work, but also takes ownership in the building. She is always willing to go the extra mile to make sure things get done the right way. Her dedication, collaboration with teachers and the attention that she demonstrates to our children is incredible.” — Rosa, Mount

Vernon Community School parent liaison



**Myra Matthews**  
**Support Specialist**  
**James K. Polk Elementary School**

“Ms. Matthews advocates for families and helps them navigate resources from housing to social services. Ms. Matthews is able to engage with all families. Through her kind and helpful demeanor and wealth of knowledge, she gains their trust. Although this goes above and beyond her role as the support specialist, her skill at breaking down barriers to assist the social worker in identifying families in need. Many families are scared or ashamed to request aid directly from the social

worker. Ms. Matthews bridges the gap and makes families feel at ease and more open to seeking assistance.” — Terry, T.C. Williams High School social worker (formerly at Polk)



**Eleanor Muse**  
**Library Assistant**  
**T.C. Williams High School Minnie Howard Campus**

Ms. Muse works diligently in the library to support reading efforts while at the same time helping manage students throughout the day. She is an outstanding example of what it means for every adult in the building to be focused on the mission of student engagement and achievement. Students respect her and appreciate the morals she helps instill in them. At the beginning of the year, when the chaos of classroom set-

up is at its max, Ms. Muse connects with every teacher, seasoned and new, and makes sure we have what we need. I've watched her take new teachers under her wing to make sure they were aware of not only library services, but the inner workings of Minnie Howard systems and culture as well." — Julian, T.C. Williams Minnie Howard Campus teacher



**Christopher Sellers**  
**Custodian**  
**George Washington Middle School**

"Mr. Sellers' drive and dedication to responding to every call and following through on their requests has impressed the staff at George Washington Middle School. In all of his interactions, I have known him to be nothing less than professional in his demeanor and rapport with all stakeholders. He is kind and respectful toward all. He also has high standards and always takes the initiative to help out. The faculty, students and the

Alexandria community have benefitted from his strong work ethic." — Tammy, George Washington Middle School campus manager



**Anna Spratt**  
**Special Education Paraprofessional**  
**Matthew Maury Elementary School**

"Ms. Spratt works relentlessly to support all of the students in my class, especially those with special learning needs. Ms. Spratt would consistently meet with me after school or before a lesson to clarify content and strategies that I was teaching to ensure she was able to teach it to her students with fidelity. She is always going above and beyond what is expected to help our kids, other teachers and our school community. She invites kids to have lunch bunch with her, tutors students after

school and hosts a wildly popular coding club after school. Ms. Spratt plays a key role in building and maintaining strong positive school culture. Her electric spirit and fun personality make everyone just feel happy when they are around her." — Meredith, Matthew Maury Elementary School teacher



**Gladys Villalobos**  
**Kindergarten Paraprofessional**  
**John Adams Elementary School**

“Ms. Villalobos has been impacting the lives of children through her work in education for many years. Her patience and positive demeanor have enabled her to develop meaningful relationships with her students, giving her an in depth understanding of their individual needs and abilities. Ms. Villalobos’ consistent encouragement and support motivates her students to work to their fullest potential and helps them grow

socially, emotionally and academically.” — Rachel, John Adams Elementary School assistant principal



**Vancine Washington**  
**Kindergarten Paraprofessional**  
**Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School**

“Ms. Washington has a rich history within ACPS and Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School community is lucky to have her. Being a new school, a lot of kids were taken out of their comfort zones during the redistricting. Almost half of the school came from William Ramsay Elementary School. When former students of William Ramsay Elementary School entered the school building during the open house and the first day of

school and saw Ms. Washington, their anxieties melted and they felt more at ease. The same for parents. There was not only a familiar face that they could relate to and trust, but someone they know and love. She has such a gift with children that is priceless.” — Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School PTA