

News U Trust

Appreciating, Developing, and Supporting School Staff

2010 Writing Competition Winners



Over 1,000 entries were submitted to the 2010 Utrust Writing Competition. Students, faculty, parents, and even a grandmother wrote about different school employees that were making a difference.

Stephanie Shaffer, a student at Trousdale County High School, won the hearts of all who read her beautiful story. Shaffer wrote about Christie Glover, who is a Trousdale High School teacher. Glover is also Shaffer's foster parent. "She took my life and helped me turn it back around, the way it is supposed to be, the way I have longed for it to be for a while," Shaffer said. "She taught me that it's not bad to trust somebody, and that it is ok to let people care about me." Shaffer won first place and received \$1,000 for her entry in the writing competition.

Rhonda Winstead, a guidance counselor at Russellville Elementary School in Hamblen County took second place and received \$500 for her essay entitled "It'll be fine....I promise," about her former 5th grade teacher, Wayne Smith. Winstead and Smith were reunited after 20 years at the presentation of her award. "It's hard to describe the feeling," Smith said when asked how it felt to know he made such a

difference in Winstead's life. "As a teacher you recognize the potential a student has and you do what you can to give them the tools they need to be successful and hope that they use them. But Rhonda was a wonderful student. She doesn't give herself enough credit for her success," Smith continued.

Beth Weatherford of Lakewood Middle School took third place, winning \$250 for her story titled, "The All American Teacher." Weatherford's story was about fellow teacher, Susan Parker. Weatherford praised Parker for her enthusiasm for teaching. Parker established an after school program called the Adventure Club that allows students to participate in hands on experiences, like planting and harvesting a garden, building survival shelters, land navigation, and they even built a compost machine. Weatherford also commended Parker for her services to our county, as she serves as an Engineer Officer in the Tennessee Army National Guard.

The writing competition has proven to be a huge success and we are excited to continue this tradition. Start thinking about someone who has made a difference in your life and start planning your essays for the 4th Annual Writing Competition! Click [here](#) for more information about the Utrust Writing Competition. See a full list of all of the 2010 Utrust Writing Competition winners on the next page.



1st Place:

Christie Glover and Stephanie Shaffer



2nd Place:

Rhonda Winstead and Wayne Smith



3rd Place:

Beth Weatherford and Susan Parker

Sherry Price and Jimmie Dougherty



Dan Tollett and Jordan Murphy



Ren Bailey and Joe Melendez



Ivy McCosh, Dan Tollett



Tammy Woolbright and Dan Tollett



Cruz Capina and Christy Weeks



Trousdale County High School Winners:
Megan Tower, Katie Kelley, Devon Tuczyn, Stephanie Shaffer



Greg Harvey, Dan Tollett, Chesnea Skeen, Susan Browder



Assistant Principal Scott Bolton, Aleia Williams and Genevieve Gray, Dan Tollett, Coach Rebecca Skeen and Rolanda Ryans



1st Place (\$1,000)- [Stephanie Shaffer](#)
2nd Place (\$500)- [Rhonda Winstead](#)
3rd Place (\$250)- [Beth Weatherford](#)

Twelve entrants each received \$100 for their essays which can be read on-line in the Utrust Make a Difference Library. Click on the names to read the stories in their entirety.

[Teresa Crawford/Ren Bailey](#), Surgoinville Elementary- Hawkins County
[Genevieve Gray](#), West View Middle School- Hamblen County
[Katie Kelley](#), Trousdale High School- Trousdale County
[Ivy McCosh](#), Niota Elementary School- McMinn County
[Sherry Price](#), Church Hill Intermediate- Hawkins County
[Chesnea Skeen](#), Sullivan South High School- Sullivan County
[Jordan Murphy](#), Hickman County High School- Hickman County
[Megan Tower](#), Trousdale High School, Trousdale County
[Devon Tuczyn](#), Trousdale High School, Trousdale County
[Christy Weeks](#), Bells Elementary School, Bells City
[Aleia Williams](#), West View Middle School- Hamblen County
[Tammy Woolbright](#), Dodson Branch School- Jackson County

"Even though we had only fifteen winners in the state, we had hundreds of school employees who were presented with a copy of an essay expressing how they had made a difference in someone's life, Dan Tollett, Utrust Administrator said. "Think of the impact it had on morale in schools across the state."

ELIMINATE SNOW DAY UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS



Many school boards in Tennessee have employees who file claims for unemployment compensation on snow days. This results in significant costs to those boards. If you object to the State Department of Labor and Workforce Development granting unemployment benefits for such days, you are told that employees are eligible to receive unemployment compensation benefits because payment was withheld for days school was not in session because of snow. Under such circumstances, employees do not receive the expected income for those days. It seems a bit harsh to try to deny such employees the income they have come to depend upon.

There may be a better way of handling this issue that results in a win/win situation. School boards traditionally contract with bus drivers, cooks, teacher assistants and some other employees to be paid for 180 days when school is in session.

We suggest that instead of paying hourly employees only for the hours and days worked, divide the money that employees will be paid for the 180 days that school is in session (or however many days the board intends to pay them in a school term). Contract with the employees to pay them that amount in equal installments over a ten-month

period instead of paying them just for days worked.

A board that wants to provide an even more significant help to its employees should offer an option to employees to receive their annual pay in 26 equal installments spread over the entire year. This is an option that many teachers prefer and one, which is a great help to those employees who have a hard time saving a portion of their earnings to meet expenses during the summer months. In the process, your board will completely eliminate the unemployment compensation costs for snow days.

For a sample employment contract to implement this recommendation, click [here](#).

Advantages to make it a win/win situation:


1. Employees will know their income whether school is in session or not.
2. No unemployment claims related to weather will be filed.

Employee morale will improve because all employees will be on the same payment schedule.



TRUSTEE SPOTLIGHT

REGINA WALLER: A VISIONARY FOR EDUCATION




Regina Waller of Hartsville has been a member of the Trousdale County School Board since 2006, and currently serves as the Board's Chairman. Waller was elected to the Utrust Board of Trustees in 2008 to represent Middle Tennessee.

Waller was chosen to serve as a member of the Utrust Advisory Team in 2010, where ten people statewide were invited to participate. The Advisory Team evaluated and proposed improvements for the Employee Appreciation Program (EAP) that Utrust offers to its members.

With the help of Waller and the other trustees the EAP has flourished, with the 2010-11 year being the most successful in the history of the program. Waller has successfully implemented the EAP in Trousdale County, serving as the only volunteer System Coordinator in the state. She takes pride in making sure that each group of school employees has an outstanding appreciation day.

"We are lucky to have Regina as a trustee," Dr. Dan Tollett, Trust Administrator, said. "She is passionate and proactive in education. She is fun to be around and she continually displays a positive, can-do attitude. She is an asset to our trust and to Trousdale County, and I see much evidence that she is making a difference for the children of Trousdale county," Tollett continued.

Waller has worked in the health industry for more than twenty years, helping many patients in need. She carries her creativity and fun-loving spirit into her work as the Director of Activities at a health and rehab center in Lebanon, where she plans programs to enrich the lives of patients and has developed a program that helps motivate, inspire and retain employees. In her free time Waller teaches art classes, is active in the PTO where she served as President for two years. She also serves as chairperson for the Communications Committee for Non-certified staff.



TOUCHDOWN!! It's Principal Appreciation time and we are celebrating with a Super Bowl theme. Principals across the state are scoring major points for their dedication to the success of students. Please recognize the leaders in your schools with the Super Bowl theme that Utrust has suggested. There are tons of exciting ideas provided in the appreciation packets to help you plan your appreciation day. Click [here](#) to view the Principal Appreciation Day packets.

Make sure you send your pictures and stories to Utrust from Principal Appreciation Day so we can add them to the website and statewide newsletter. Send them in to your local media outlets and increase awareness about the program in your area.

FOOD SERVICE APPRECIATION DAY

Drivers, start your engines! Get set...GO!! School systems around Tennessee were off for the races for Food Service Appreciation Day. Although the snow postponed some of the celebrations, schools made sure they celebrated their cafeteria staffs as soon as they returned.

"Thanks for turbo charging our engines!" was colorfully written on a large banner with student's signatures all around it at McPheeter's Bend Elementary School in Hawkins County.

"IT WAS GREAT TO SAY THANK YOU TO OUR CAFETERIA STAFF. IT MADE THEM VERY HAPPY, WHICH FELT GOOD."

Beech Elementary made sure their cafeteria staff knew how much they were

appreciated by presenting them with baskets, overflowing with items donated by different classes, and local businesses, along with "Crew Chief" cookbooks filled with recipes submitted by parents. "It was great to say thank you to our cafeteria staff. It made them very happy, which felt good," James Flynn (A-Team member) said.

Gainesboro Elementary provided their cafeteria staff with a surprise luncheon where they were given cards and racing theme gifts, such as a shop rag (dishtowel), dipstick (spoon), and a checklist (notepad). Each of the students said "Thanks for fueling me up!" as they went through the line.

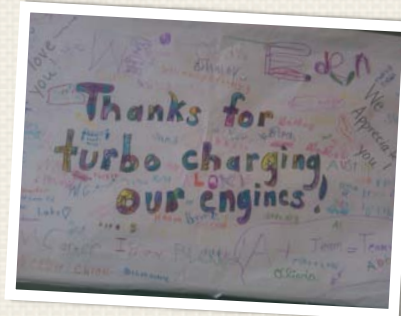
A BIG thanks to our cafeteria staffs around Tennessee for fueling the student's think tanks and helping them cross the finish line to success!



Hawkins Elementary School's A-Team made personalized aprons for their cafeteria staff



Dodson Branch honored their cafeteria staff with letters of thanks, posters, and goodie bags



McPheeter's Bend Elementary used the racing theme for their posters



Bells City School celebrated their food services staff with the racing theme



Mountain City made racing flags for their food service staff, along with goodie bags and poems

Beech Elementary showed appreciation to their cafeteria staff with Crew Chief cookbooks, letters and thank you notes



EAP Participation Flourishes

2011 has started off with a bang! The school year is only half way over and we have had more participation in the EAP than ever. Principals have done an outstanding job choosing coordinators to lead the students in the appreciation day planning and celebrations. The new emphasis on student involvement has certainly helped with the expansive success of the program.

The EAP is significantly improving employee morale, teaching students important educational and life skills, but central to the goals of the program it stresses the value of expressing appreciation to school employees and others.

We have received stories and pictures after each appreciation day, and being able to see the excitement on each of the employees face is priceless. Not only do the employees enjoy the appreciation days, but the students get to experience the satisfaction, as well. It is a great experience for everyone!

Don't miss out on this wonderful opportunity to show appreciation to all of the school employees who make a difference in the lives of so many. By implementing the EAP, you will improve employee morale, teach students about the importance of having an attitude of gratitude, and increase positive public awareness about your schools and school system throughout your community.

Please contact [Utrust](#) if you have questions or have an interest in participating in the world's best Employee Appreciation Program.



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