

# FRIENDSHIP'S ASHLEE HALL RECEIVES SAVE THE CHILDREN STATE READ AWARD



**Above:** The Crockett County School District contingent at the Save The Children Opryland Summit: (from left) Tammy Womack (MCES), Ashlee Hall (FES), Cindy Nolen (FES Principal), Marsha Foust (GES Principal), and Cassie Pearson (GES).

**Above:** Friendship Elementary's reading ambassador Ashlee Hall holds the State Best READ Program of the Year Award for Tennessee.

## By Ron Barry

Crockett County School District's elementary schools don't joke about the importance of solid reading programs in their classes – except when the “reading ambassadors” get together to show students how much fun it is to read.

The district's three elementary schools – Gadsden, Maury City, and Friendship – each have a designated reading ambassador who works directly with Save The Children, the international non-profit agency that has provided student literacy programs to select Tennessee public school districts since 2006. In Crockett County, the three ambassadors – Cassie Pearson (Gadsden), Tammy Womack (Maury City), and Ashlee Hall (Friendship) – work closely together to plan events and distribute as many books as possible to county children.

Their efforts received a great boost of affirmation this past week when Friendship's Hall was named the State Best READ Program of the Year for Tennessee from the Save The Children officials.

Friendship Principal Cindy Nolen had nothing but high praise for her school's “ambassador.” “Ashlee has been a tireless cheerleader for increasing reading literacy and getting books into the hands of our students,” Nolen said. “The students, teachers, parents, and staff have worked so hard together to build a program that was recognized with unbelievable success. More than five million words were read by this tiny school last year, and our school reached a Level 5 in growth. Congratulations to Ashlee for her dedication and visionary ideas to promote reading, and a special thank you to Save the Children for being such a great partner.”

Hall, who received the award at Save The Children's Summit at the Opryland Hotel, was very grateful for the help she's received from the organization and the community.

“It truly takes a village and I'm so thankful for this one,” she said. “We are well on our way to having another amazing year.”

Hall's award is a testament to the work put in by Pearson and Womack as well. When Save The Children is involved in a local event, you'll rarely find one of the ambassadors without the other two close beside. They truly work as a team, illustrating the many positive qualities that have allowed the READ program to flourish in this community.

Save The Children has been awarded grants ranging from \$500,000 to \$2 million by the State's General Assembly to help fund school-based literacy programs. The factors primarily considered by Save The Children are poverty, rural location, and student academic achievement. Studies have shown that more than 70% of the students tested within the participating programs showed significant gains in reading skills, with that number being even higher in the lower grades.



**Top Right:** The READ Best Program Award won by Friendship's Ashlee Hall.

**Right:** Crockett's Save The Children Reading Ambassadors: Gadsden's Cassie Pearson, Maury City's Tammy Womack, and Friendship's Ashlee Hall.